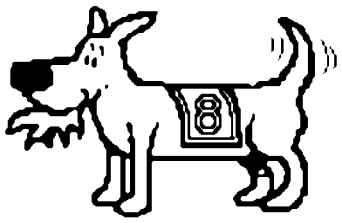
The Zero Page

The newsletter of the Commodore Users of Wichita
"For the sharing, learning, and love of Commodore computers"

Number 30, April 1996



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

The Year 2000 Problem: Should Commodore Users be Concerned?

by Dale Lutes

Perhaps you've heard of it. It's receiving a lot of attention in the media. It's real. It's inevitable. It's called the *Year 2000 Problem.* For Commodore users the questions are: "What is it?" and "Do I need to worry about it?"

For decades, software developers have been writing applications that read and store the year as a two-digit number. When I booted GEOS and set the clock tonight, I entered the date as 03/01/96. That 96 is small enough to be stored in just one byte of memory. In contrast, storing 1996 would require two bytes. Back in the 60's and 70's (see, I just saved a couple more bytes!) when memory and disks were limited in size and extremely expensive, computer programmers *had* to be byte-conscious. A large database containing date-stamped information on a medium or mainframe sized computer could waste thousands or millions of bytes if they stored the full year*. Even today, with the storage problem solved, users find it annoying to have to type in the extra two digits.

Next CUW Meeting:
Saturday, April 13
1:00 - 5:00 pm
1411 South Oliver

Dwayne Howard will be demonstrating CALCAID, a spreadsheet program that was featured in the November 1986 edition of RUN magazine

OK, the stage is set now for December 31, 1999. What happens to all of those systems when the ball over Time's Square drops to signal the start of the year 2000? A couple of things actually. Most software will probably just continue chopping off the first two digits (if it ever asked for them in the first place) and will treat 2000 as the year 0. Maybe it doesn't sound like a big deal, but any program that does time arithmetic is going to have a hard time coping when it treats January 1, 2000 as a date nearly 100 years ago! The first thing that comes to my mind is a program that computes interest. Other programs may treat 2000 as the year 100. These may work a little better. If they allow you to enter four digits, they probably display the year that way, too. Some may fail miserably, though, if they try to squeeze the number 100 in a report that only has room for two digits.

So, will the year 2000 cause any problems for Commodore users? Those of you who use your systems for games, word processing, education, music, artwork, and other applications that are not date-sensitive can rest at ease. Those of you who use your systems for business and financial applications that do date arithmetic will need to take a good, close look at your software.

If your software simply won't accept more than two digits and does some kind of calculation based on the date, you are definitely in trouble. As a GEOS user, I know that when I click on **view by date** from the DeskTop, I'll actually have to go to the end of the display to see the most recent files. Lucky for me, this particular problem is only an annoyance rather than a major show-stopper. If your software reads and writes four-digit years, your chances are better. But unless you *know* for sure how the program handles the date internally or stores it on disk, you are still at risk.

Most of us are using commercial software that was written years ago and don't have any way of getting a new version that is 2000-ready. You may find yourself forced to use a different program. Find out what software others are using and see if it will survive the turn of the century. This is where user groups like ours can be very beneficial. If you have written your own applications or if you use a database that lets you customize the size of the fields, then you have to option to modify the code or the record layouts yourself.

You have about four years to get everything changed. The clock is ticking...

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* Most of us think of a character taking up exactly one byte. I've worked on computer systems that employed a coding scheme to pack three characters into two bytes!

Is a User's Day Practical?

by Fred Earley

About ten years ago, when computer prices dropped to the level where the average person could dream of owning one, the excitement of a Computer User's Day was almost like what we see on a Super Bowl Sunday. There was electricity in the air as we browsed among many new computers such as Radio Shack, Atari, Commodore and others. Today, just a few short years later, we have become so computer literate that it would take the money of Forbes to create such enthusiasm again.

It is unlikely that Commodore users can convince IBM compatible users to convert to Commodore. But in Wichita there are still Commodore users who have never heard of our club. They seem to be hiding in the woodwork. When Dwayne and I visited the Independent Computer User's club (IBM compatibles) a few weeks ago we heard that there were two Commodore users in their club who had never heard of us. Last week an IBM MS-DOS friend phoned from Derby to say that a Commodore user wanted to know how to transfer files to IBM. I mailed the *Big Blue Reader* to him but by the time the postman delivered the package, the former Commodore user had disposed of all of his Commodore equipment.

Would it perhaps be practical to have some extra special demos at our club at the present location and advertise the daylights out of the meeting in order to bring some more Commodore users out of the woodwork?

Editor's note: Many of our members recall the huge success of those User Days and have a real desire to take part in them once again. Fred Earley, Dwayne Howard, and Moe Shouse have been working on a commitee to organize a User Day. However our enthusiasm does not seem to be matched by the other user groups in town. Fred raises a good question with his article. Might it not be more practical to look into better ways to advertise a special Commodore-only event at our regular location? We hope to hear your comments on this issue at our next meeting.

Judy Matthews has the following equipment for sale:

1) A C-128 computer, 1541 disk drive, and a 40/80 column monochrome monitor. $100.00 for the complete system.

2) An extra C-64 power supply. $10.00.

You can reach Judy at 522-3146. The best time to call is in the evening after 7:00.

Commodore Day

by Fred Earley

Our new CUW president, Mr. Zyx, has proclaimed October xx to be Commodore Day for Wichita and has asked for the following volunteers:

- ✔ An advertising manager to head a committee to decide what the best advertising strategy is for maximum coverage of existing Commodore users.
- ✔ A poster Committee to design advertising posters.
- ✔ A Program Committee to plan what demonstrations can best be presented on Commodore Day.
- ✔ A welcoming committee to greet potential members as they enter.
- ✔ A refreshment committee to plan refreshments for Commodore Day.

Mr. Zyx has suggested that the advertising committee be given authorization to spend no more than three hundred dollars on their campaign.

Mr. Zyx has suggested that the refreshment committee be authorized to spend no more than seventy-five dollars for refreshments.

It is expected that this will be the biggest day of the year for CUW.

It may be necessary to provide a nurse to revive Marie Both after she reads the above proposed expenditures.

Your CUW Steering Committee members are:

Arlen Gould	Chair
Marie Both	Vice-Chair
Robert Bales	BBS Representative
Francis Catudal	Public Domain Librarian
Nate Dannenberg	BBS Representative
Shaun Halstead	Internet Representative
Dwayne Howard	geoSIG Chairman
Dale Lutes	Newsletter Editor
Don McManamey	Disk Editor
Jerry Shook	Quartermaster

Rear View Mirror

by Morris Shouse

I love to read Commodore magazines, even if they are 8 to 10 years old. I can always find something good. I really like *RUN's* ''Magic'' and *Gazette's* ''Feedback.'' I like to see if I can find a short command that does a lot more than you think it could just by looking at it. I also like to find short programs that do strange things, like mess up the video display, but not really hurt anything. I found one that really messes up the video in 80 columns but it comes back at the end of a loop. I would like to get a bunch of short programs like this together and put them on a disk. Then I would need a good name for it.

Now on to my latest find, from the October 1986 *Gazette,* ''Escaping with the 128'' by Jim Vaugh. This is not about a bad guy stealing your 128. It is about 27 features that let you do a lot of things with editing, like cancel or enable auto-insert mode. OK, OK, I will tell you. To cancel auto-insert mode you press and release the ESC key, then press the C key. To enable auto-insert mode use the A key. However some of these or all my not work inside of some programs. I found out that inside GEOS the cursor flashing mode cannot be changed. So you will just have to try out different things and see what happens.

This article groups these escape codes in 3 categories: Editing Enhancements, Screen Control, and Miscellaneous Sequences. The categories are summarized below.

Table 1: Editing Enhancements

ESC A	enable auto-insert mode
ESC C	cancel auto-insert mode
ESC D	delete the current logical line
ESC I	insert a blank line
ESC J	move to beginning of current line
ESC K	move to end of current line
ESC O	cancel quote mode (ESC ESC also works)
ESC P	erase from beginning of line to cursor
ESC Q	erase from cursor to end of line
ESC @	erase from cursor to end of screen

Table 2: Screen Control Enhancements

ESC B	set bottom right corner of output window
ESC L	allow scrolling
ESC M	disable scrolling
ESC T	set top left corner of output window
ESC V	scroll screen up one line
ESC W	scroll screen down one line
ESC X	switch between 40- and 80-column modes

Table 3: Miscellaneous Sequences

ESC E	set cursor to nonblinking mode
ESC F	set cursor to flashing mode
ESC G	turn on (enable) bell tone
ESC H	turn off (disable) bell tone
ESC N	return to normal 80-column display
ESC R	reverse 80-col character and background colors
ESC S	change 80-column cursor to block
ESC U	change 80-column cursor to underline
ESC Y	restore default tab stops
ESC Z	clear all tab stops

The article does a very good job of telling you how to use the ESC key. It gets a little into windowing and even how to use it in programing. There is a demo program listed in the back of the book. I don't know if we have this program in our Public Domain library. If I can find the program, it would be good if we could get it into the *Disk O'Quarter.*

This is your last chance to pick up Harv Harris' *Tax Survival Kit* before the April 15 tax deadline!

Don't let the IRS catch you with your pants down at tax time. See Dale Lutes or Marie Both at the next meeting for your copy of the best tax program available for the C64 and C128. The cost is only $5.00 to CUW members.

The Zero Page is a monthly publication of the Commodore Users of Wichita. The opinions expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the CUW. Unless otherwise stated, articles in this newsletter may be reprinted by other Commodore user groups without permission provided that the author and the CUW are given proper credit.

Meetings of the CUW are scheduled for the second Saturday of each month. The deadline for articles is 14 days prior to the meeting day. Submissions are accepted on 1541, 1571, or 1581 formatted floppy disks. geoWrite, ASCII, or PETASCII files are preferred. In a pinch, paper hard copy will work. Call Dale at 721-0835 or mail your articles to:

Commodore Users of Wichita
c/o Dale Lutes
11102 W. 17th Street
Wichita, KS 67212-1187

In case you are interested, *The Zero Page* is produced using a Commodore 128 and geoPublish. geoPubLaser is used to print the final copy on a PostScript laser printer.

Jerry's Corner

by Jerry Shook

Well, I guess I have taken a nice vacation from writing articles for our little paper and it is time to get back to work -- or at least that is what the hints aimed at me have been lately.

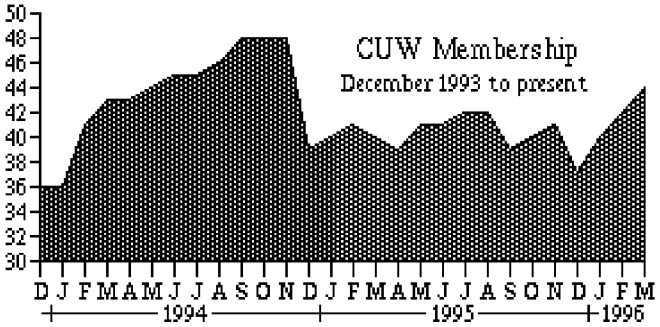
As you all know our club is in constant flux as we gain new members and lose some old members. The thing that is amazing is that our membership stays so constant. Even though we have members drop out there seems to always be new people that are looking for the kind of help that we have to offer. This year has been no different. I believe we have picked up at least 6 new members since January and I understand that we might have as many as 4 possible new members coming to this month's meeting. This puts a big burden on each of us and especially the older members. Because if we wish to continue, we must show the new members and prospective members that they are welcome and that they have things to offer to the club also. In this way, we will be a family and all benefit from our club. When you see someone that looks like they may be lost, greet them and find out if you can help. If nothing else, point out the officers of the club so that we can show them that we do have the answers that they are looking for. As for you new members I would ask that you have patience with the older members and remember that ours is a hobby club. As with most hobbies, we sometimes we get a little involved with what we are doing and fail to see the needs of others around us. If you see something that is going on and you don't understand, ask questions. Most of us have had the same lack of knowledge at one time and had to ask the same type of questions, so don't be shy.

Enough of my soap box. There are a lot of things coming up this year both in activities at our club meetings as well as products, services, and hardware from other sources for the C=64 and C=128. I remember how only a few years ago at a board meeting for CAUGW that one of our leaders at the time made the statement that it really was a waste of time and money to continue supporting the 8 bit machines since it was obvious that most people would not keep or support them anymore. I suppose he was right to a point, but the thing that he had forgotten was that no other type or model of computer in the world had sold as well as the C=64 and that there were millions of them out there with millions of loyal users. GEOS is probably one of best things to happen to the 64. This operating system gave us the look and feel similar to the Mac and Windows on the newer machines, and did it before they got it. The 128 came along and added more memory, little better keyboard, and yet still would run the 64s program base. In effect, it increased the 8-bit base since both the 64 and the 128 could use the same software and almost all the hardware on either machine. CMD is probably our most ardent supporter. They have come out with a great number of enhancements for the 64 and 128. I like JiffyDOS the best, but they also have the best 3-1/2 inch disk on the market and their RAMlink cartridge not only gives us up to 16 megs of RAM but also allows us to hook up to their hard drive which gets us into the gigabytes of fast disk storage. I haven't even touched the surface of all the goodies that have and are coming out in support of 8-bit machines that allow us to keep up with big boys. We may not have one of the biggest or the fastest machines on the road today but we do have the most dependable and long lived ones ever made.

Random Access

by Dale Lutes

Every once in a while someone will ask me how many members the CUW has. You may be surprised to learn that this question stumps me. I can tell you how many newsletters are printed and mailed, but because of newsletter exchanges and sample copies, those numbers are higher than our actual paid membership. The question came to my mind again a few days ago and I decided to put it to rest (at least for the time being). So, I fired up the database and printed out the begin and end dates for all of our members, past and present. What I found is summarized in the chart below.



With no memberships to expire, the number of CUW members only went up during our first year. We took a big hit in December 1994 when ten of our charter members elected not to renew. However, things have held pretty steady at around 40 members since that time. I think that it is significant that we have never fallen below our original count of 36 members. And out of that original 36, we still have 22 active charter members. Not bad for an organization that supports a ''dying'' computer system. In fact, I think we've done a darned good job of supporting the Commodore community here in Wichita. Thanks to all of you for helping make the CUW what it is today.

In case you hadn't already noticed, *The Zero Page* is a little thicker than usual this month. One of the reasons is the return of ''Jerry's Corner'' by Jerry Shook. Another is the inclusion of two articles by Fred Earley on the future of what we used to call User Day. Don McManamey's and Moe Shouse's columns are included once again. And although Dwayne Howard and Robert Bales are not represented in this issue, they are responsible for some of the more recent submissions. So while I am handing out kudos, I want to give special recognition to these members for their contributions to *The Zero Page.*

Don's Digest

by Don Mcmanamey

This months digest is in direct response to the tutorial I gave last month. In an effort to help people understand *The Write Stuff* better, I started to show just what a word processor was and to explain how to get started. Early on, one question was raised. Can I sort a list using *The Write Stuff?* The answer is yes! At first when I tried to show how it works and it didn't, my answer was, ''Yes, but only on the 128.'' As we progressed we discovered the answer was ''Yes, but on the 64 you must use a pre-Speller version.'' I had started by telling that having the Speller wasn't enough. Some features were left off the Speller version to make room for the Speller and still have room for several pages of text. Here and now I will try to make it clear to all of you whether you were at the tutorial or not. The original TWS disk does not have the Speller nor can you spell check with it. To do so, you must load the new version on the back side of the Speller disk. The front side has the dictionary which contains 78,000 words. In some cases, the features you want to use will not be on this disk. In that case you will want to load the original disk. When we at the CUW sell TWS we include the original and the Speller in a set. Sit down and read through the booklet to see what all it will do even if you don't need or understand how to use them. You might want to use a HI-LITER to accent the features which interest you. Bring your questions to the club and we'll do our best to help you out.

Now I want to help clarify how to sort a list. Let's say you have a list of names like this:

Don
Marie
Dale
Jerry
Arlen

To sort them, simply put the cursor on the first name in the list and press the control key. At the prompt press E to *Eat* or *Erase* text. Next press the P key which will cause TWS to eat the entire *Paragraph.* In this case you will need to press it 5 times to eat all the names. Now press the back arrow key to return to type mode. You can restore the text you ate by pressing the CONTROL key and then R for *Restore* or you can press the SHIFT□key and hold it down while pressing the R key to *Restore and Sort.* You will be given the choice of sorting from A to Z or Z to A. Make your choice and you will be asked which column you want sorted. Here is where the confusion can come in. In this case there is only one column so press return. The results will look like this:

Arlen
Dale
Don
Jerry
Marie

But what if you had more information? Every time TWS finds a space it considers the column number to change. Columns are determined by spaces and not by the number of characters or words. If some names include a middle name as well as a last name and others don't, it would goof up the whole process. I'll show you what I mean. Here is our original list but with last and middle names for some and no middle name for others. We will try to sort by last name. Our sort by column 2 is like this:

Marie Both
Dale David Lutes
Arlen Gould
Donald Ramon McManamey
Jerry Shook

In this list Donald Ramon McManamey is in the correct place only because both R and M fall between G and S, but notice Lutes is second in the list. David is in the second column. You could start with the last name and then first name and finally middle name but what if you had addresses too? And suppose you wanted to sort by zip code. Keeping all this straight is just too much. You can tie first and middle names together (you probably wouldn't sort by middle name) by using a shifted spaces in place of spaces. For this example we will put a shifted space between the names "Dale" and "David" then also between "Donald" and "Ramon". This will add the middle name to the first. Let's see how this would sort.

Marie Both
Arlen Gould
Dale David Lutes
Donald Ramon McManamey
Jerry Shook

Now Dale is in the right place. In the same way you could tie the street number to the street name. Especially if some streets had north, south, east, or west destination you might want to tie these to the number if you didn't tie the name and number together.

I have a list of songs we sing at church. The list includes the song number and when it was last sung. I can sort the list in alphabetical order, by number or by date. The date is one column, the number is the next and the title is the last. Each word in the title is tied together though they probably wouldn't have to be. If the date includes the year then the year should be first then the month and day. To make a date sort come out right be sure to include a zero before numbers less than 10 i.e 96-03-10 not 96-3-10. This will make it sort properly. Now on my song list I have no numbers over 3 digits but I do have numbers with less than 3 digits. To make them sort properly you can put zeros in front or shifted spaces Here are two examples.

245
135
29
92
6
448

(Continued on next page)

Don's Digest (continued from previous page)

This list will sort like this:

```
135
245
29
448
6
92
```

By adding adding only spaces we get the same sort, but with shifted spaces here is what we get:

```
  6
 29
 92
135
245
448
```

This is exactly what we wanted. Remember, there is a limit to how much the buffer can hold, but this is a powerful tool. Good luck with your sorts and keep all your ducks in a row.

Editor's note: The Helping Hand, *which usually occupies this space, will be back again next month.*

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:

Arlen Gould
129 S. Spruce
Penalosa, KS 67035

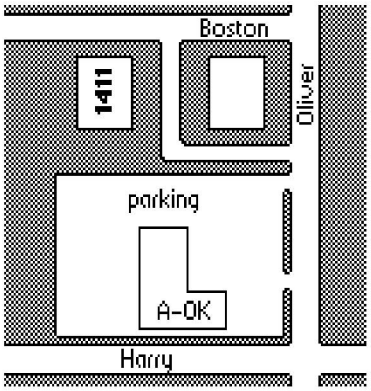
Members may nominate themselves. Nominees are required to submit a short position statement for inclusion in the May newsletter. Elections will be held at the May meeting. The new officers will assume their posts on June 1.

April Meeting Agenda

1:00 - 2:00	Equipment setup, informal meeting
2:00 - 2:45	Business meeting, Nominations
2:45 - 3:00	Break
3:00 - 4:00	Feature demonstration
4:00 - 5:00	Meeting over, informal gathering, equipment teardown

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

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



You may join or renew your membership by mail.
Complete this form and mail with a check payable to:

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

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

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

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

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