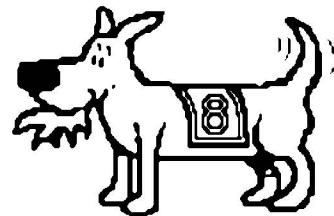


The Zero Page

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



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

Number 48, October 1997



Rear View Mirror

by Moe Shouse

For this month, I'll go back

exactly ten years to October 1987, Ahoy! magazine issue #46. What I found was a review by Morton Kevelson about Basic 8.0. Many different companies besides Commodore made software and hardware for the Commodore 8-bit machines. But this operating system offers a lot more than most. It should have gone over well, but instead it's just another forgotten system.

When the 128 came out, it offered more bang for the buck than any other eight bit machine. One thing it had that showed a lot of potential was the 80-column screen. But in their infinite wisdom, Commodore made the control of 80-column very hard: It can only be controlled through two memory addresses \$d600 and \$d601. It's like building a ship in a bottle. You have lots of room, only after you go through a much smaller space. But where there's a will there's a way! That's what Basic 8.0 is all about. It's not just a program but an operating system. It adds about 48 commands. All use the @ as a prefix. The paint program is simply called basic paint. But don't let the name trick you. This is a very powerful program. It does boxes, circles, polygons, solids, and pattern fills. And it will automatically draw 3-D solid shapes such as spheres, cylinders, and toroids. Also cut, paste, zoom. Will use joystick or a 1531 mouse. The demos are great!

It also has a utility called Walrus Icon Operating System, it looks a lot like GEOS with boxes and icons and drive icons. But it's not meant to be a full-featured interface. It is only to show what can be done with Basic 8.0.

The one draw back is that to get color you must have the 64K video RAM chips. A lot of the article talks about screen colors, pixel sizes, bit map sizes, and so on. Of course all of that kind of stuff goes right over my head. But it does warn you about one

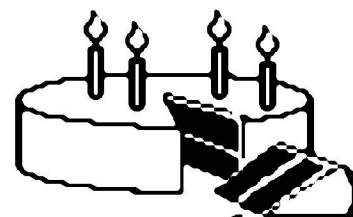
chip, the 4164, is not the one to use. It is referenced in the Commodore 128 Programmers Reference Guide. The only reason for the inclusion in the official Commodore document is that the chip that does work, the 4464, was not yet available.

One last thing: This system came on disk or a ROM chip, that you put in the empty ROM socket found on every C=128. To use the ROM chip you just hold down the CONTROL key on power up and it loads into the regular memory of the C=128. It does not run out off the ROM chip. Or you load it off the disk. Either way the programming code is the same.

**Next CUW Meeting:
Saturday, October 11
1:00 - 5:00 pm
1411 South Oliver**

Having trouble keeping track of
what programs are on what disk?
A disk catalog program can help.
Find out more when Jerry Shook
demos DCMR at our next meeting.

I think this system should have really allowed the C=128 to do some great things, but somehow it just didn't catch on. Maybe someone could still make this system work. After all, this is a basic system made so the user could write their own software, it does have a lot of potential.



**Happy 4th
Birthday, CUW**

Your CUW Steering Committee members are:

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Random Access

by Dale Lutes

An Adventure in Computer Games

“You are standing at the end of a road before a small brick building. Around you is a forest. A small stream flows out of the building and down a gully.”

So begins *Adventure*, the original text-based computer adventure game. Today, we associate computer games with fast-paced, high-resolution graphics. The sports, combat, and fantasy simulations on our store shelves feature scenery, vehicles, and creatures that behave in a very realistic fashion.

In the 1990s, we take fast, high-resolution computer graphics almost for granted. It's easy to forget that throughout most of the 1970s, computer graphics devices were specialized, high-dollar items. They could be found in university research labs and in some industry applications, but the vast majority of computer users had no access to such things. Home computers and game machines were still a thing of the future.

Some early game programmers used the ASCII (or EBCDIC - yuck!) character sets to construct simple graphics. Games like *Star Trek* or *Telengard* could be played even on slow, hardcopy terminals while still providing visual cues.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Stardate	3600.0
2	.	E	.	.	.	.	.	*	.	.	Condition	GREEN
3	.	.	*	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Position	7-6,2-2
4	*	.	.	.	*	.	.	.	.	.	Life support	ACTIVE
5	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Warp factor	5.0
6	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Energy	6250.00
7	.	.	*	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Torpedoes	10
8	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	*	.	.	Shields	DOWN 100 Percent
9	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Klingons left	4
10	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	*	.	.	Time left	7.00

Short range scan from *Star Trek*

But some of the best computer games ever written used no graphics whatsoever. Text adventure games rely on written descriptions of the surroundings to construct their fantasy worlds. Like old-time radio listeners, players use their imaginations to visualize the action. Forget your joystick - commands such as, OPEN MAILBOX, LIGHT LANTERN, and KILL DRAGON typed in at the keyboard let you move about and interact with objects in the adventure world. The games have an ultimate goal, but with a number of puzzles to solve along the way. This makes them games of thought, rather than reflex.

The finest games of this genre, *Adventure* and *Zork*, were ported to many different different machines and operating systems. It was only natural that with the advent (pun wholly intended) of the home computer, many of these games would find their way into

our personal software libraries.

Without a doubt, Infocom was (is?) the king of the adventure game publishers. A number of Infocom games were packaged and sold under the Commodore label. Among them was *Zork*, which had already proven its popularity among college computer science students. Like *Adventure* before it, *Zork* is a pure fantasy game with an underground labyrinth to navigate, puzzles to solve, enemies to defeat, and treasures to find. *Zork* for the C-64 was released in three separate parts (*Zork I, II, and III*). The series was so successful that Infocom followed up later with several *Zork* sequels.

Adventure game writers didn't restrict themselves to fantasy. Infocom also delivered a murder mystery complete with physical evidence and dossiers on the suspects in *Deadline....*

>SOUTH

George's Bedroom

This is George's bedroom. In addition to the normal furnishings, there is a small liquor cabinet, and a stereo with records and tapes. The door, leading to the hallway to the north, is open. Another door, to the east is open. George is sitting on his bed, deep in thought.

>GEORGE, TELL ME ABOUT MR. ROBNER

"Like I told your detective friend yesterday, we

didn't get along too well. He was always riding me, giving me a hard time." George gets worked up talking about it. "Look man, I'm not going to lie and say I loved him, right? He got what..." He stops in mid-sentence.

Suspended is another from Infocom. This one with a science fiction premise. You are in suspended animation, controlling the actions of six robots which serve as your eyes, ears, and hands. Each of the robots has a very different view of its environment..

>SENSA, REPORT

FC: Cryolink established to Sena.

FC: Full report from SENSA

SENSA: Internal map reference -- Gamma Repair
Vibrational activity and electrical emanations detected from the north are stronger than those in the immediate vicinity. The conveying mechanism is not in motion. In the room with me is Waldo. A large object emits strange flows, its surface a tracery of filament-like circuitry. the circuitry is concentrated near the center of one side.
SENSA: I cannot sense a thing in my grasping extensions.

>WALDO, REPORT

FC: Cryolink established to Waldo.

FC: Full report from WALDO

WALDO: Internal map reference -- Gamma Repair
I have reached the south end of this area. The walkway ends here. The walkway is not in motion. In

the room with me is Sensa. A large object sits before me. Sonar indicates it is hollow, but not empty.
WALDO: My extensions grasp nothing.

We've all been frustrated by government bureaucracy and this is the theme in Infocom's *Bureaucracy*...

>GIVE DELIVERY MAN US EXCESS
[Taking the US Excess card out of the wallet first]

The delivery man glances at your US Excess card and shakes his head. "Sorry," he says, handing the card back to you. "This expired last month. Hey!" he says, with the air of someone who has just thought of a new philosophical explanation of life, suffering and why there's never enough Chinese ravioli for everyone at dinner to have a second one each, "You know what you should do? You should get your bank to send you another one."

Incredibly, you resist the urge to kill the worthless cake-brain on the spot.

This game is unique in that it was one of the few programs ever developed specifically for the Commodore 128's 80-column mode.

Perhaps my favorite Infocom game is *Nord and Bert Couldn't Make Head or Tail Of It*. This is actually a collection of eight short adventures constructed around puns, cliches, spoonerisms, and other plays on the English language. In *Nord and Bert* you are actually encouraged to put the cart before the horse!...

Road

The telltail smell of grain and dung drifts by. You're on a dusty road in front of abandoned farm -- a nice-sized spread of land that stretches far out to meet the horizon.

A wooden cart sits in the dusty road here.

An old dog sits in the dust at the side of the road, feeling all of the spirit of gravity, looking dog-eared and worn out by a lifetime on the farm.

>TEACH OLD DOG NEW TRICKS
The old dog perks up one if its dog-eared ears, then the other. Its tail emerges from the surrounding dust and begins oscillating back and forth with such intensity that you'd think it was a case of the tail wagging the dog.

Infocom wasn't the only company to produce text adventures for the Commodore market. Telarium marketed a series of games based on popular novels such as Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and Arthur C. Clarke's *Rendezvous With Rama*. The Telarium games are not pure text adventures though. Graphics accompanying the text can be turned on and off according to the player's taste and certain portions of the games are played arcade-style with a joystick. In *Rendezvous*, for instance, the spaceship docking maneuvers are controlled this way.

Undoubtedly, there were other companies that marketed text adventures. Epyx sold a game based on Isaac Asimov's *Robots of Dawn*, but I'm not sure if it was text-based. I recall that one publisher even sold an adventure construction set so that text adventure fans could write their own.

If you like playing adventure games, I'd enjoy hearing your opinions and recommendations. If you've never tried a text adventure, I hope that this column has sparked your interest. Many of the games I've mentioned here are available locally at Z-Software as well as by mail order. So, take up your sword and your lamp, and begin your own adventure.

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:

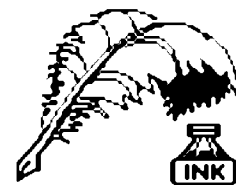
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Don's Digest

by Don McManamey

As I sit here to share my thoughts once again, I am concerned that some will misunderstand what I am trying to say. Let me start then with the following



statement: I love my Commodore 128. I have no intention of getting rid of it nor do I plan to stop using it. I think it is wonderful that there are companies like CMD who still support us with such fine things as the RAMLink. I am also pleased that people like Moe are willing to show how these things work. If you had been to the last meeting, which most of our members were not, you would know that Moe gave a demo of the RAMLink by CMD. In part, this is a review of the RAMLink based upon that demo.

I really did not know what a RAMLink was before the meeting. I guess I should have known because I had seen Dale's, but somehow I was under the impression it was a link between the computer and a ram expander. In part, that is correct. I thought for whatever reason that you had to have both. Since they are not cheap, I wondered why people bought them.

(Don's Digest is Continued on page 4)

Don's Digest (continued from page 3)

The RAMLink has the capability of being your ram expander with several advantages. One is that you do not have to unplug it in order to plug in things such as game cartridges where the ram expanders I've seen had to be removed to use other cartridges. Second, the RAMLink is expandable. While it does have a maximum amount of memory that you can put in it, the capacity is enormous for a Commodore. Third, there is a battery back-up available. One can use the RAMLink as you would a disk drive or even better, a hard drive. The battery back-up means that data is not lost when power is turned off, as we all know is the case with programs in the computer. Forth, it comes with a nice array of software to support everything. Many tasks would be difficult at best and perhaps impossible without this software. Among the many things you can do is create what the computer thinks is a 1541, 1571, or 1581 disk drive. You could store heavily protected games on one of these "phantom" disks and the load would be almost instantaneous. As I see it this is probably the only real advantage over a hard drive.

CMD does make controllers (interfaces) for SCSI (usually called scuzzy) drives. This interface comes with one drive and I've seen used hard drives for as little as twenty dollars. I should say here that the RAMLink I saw also had JiffyDOS. I don't remember if it was standard equipment. *[Editor's note: Yes, JiffyDOS is built into every RAMLink]*

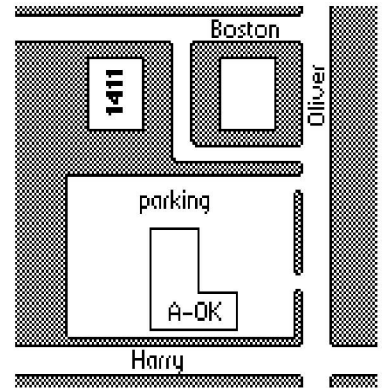
The RAMLink has quite a number of commands which allow you to do things such as make partitions which act like another drive.

Then there are commands for calling up that drive or changing to another drive. This is where I think CMD fell down. In watching Moe move (quite smoothly) from one thing to another one is reminded of running an IBM before Windows or perhaps using CPM on a Commodore 128. I don't think most people want to learn all those new commands. It is true that you can use a cheat sheet but why? Most of us "Die-Hard" users in the club have gone to IBM or Mac as a second computer. Here we simply choose from a menu of choices to create a new folder and there it is. To put something in it we just drag it there. To load it we just click on it. To change drives we click on it. Does this sound familiar from somewhere? Of course it does. Mac OS and MS Windows both got their start in the same way: Copying and improving on GEOS.

Now I hate to go over the ground we covered in a past issue where several of us talked about our "dream machines" but do you realize that GEOS is owned by the people who make the RAMLink? Yes, both are CMD products. Why, when they spent all that time and money building the RAMLink and writing the operating system for it did they not also include GEOS on a chip and do these things within this environment? Even if they didn't want to operate within GEOS they could have had a single command to call up a menu where you simply choose what you want to do. That is just one command. I say again, one command. CMD has given us the power of a PC and all the headaches. To me that is one step backwards. Don't get me wrong. I wish CMD well just as I do all Commodore users. I just think they could have done better.

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:

Commodore Users of Wichita
c/o Marie Both
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) _____