The Zero Page
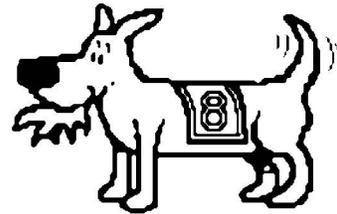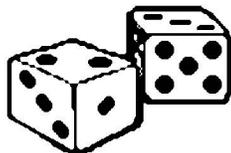
The newsletter of the Commodore Users of Wichita

"For the sharing, learning, and love of Commodore computers"

Number 51, January 1998

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

Random Access
by Dale Lutes

I think it was Mark Twain who said, "The rumors of my death are greatly exaggerated." I am feeling the same way about our little club. You see, some members (myself included) were becoming more than a little discouraged by the decreases in our membership and meeting attendance figures. But the tremendous support shown at our December meeting has convinced me that it is far from time to give up on the CUW. We had ten members renew for another year and I think that I can still count on a few more of the "old hands" to bring our total well over 20. To each of you who renewed, I want to extend my personal thanks. It was one of the best Christmas presents I received this year.

At this time, I want to call your attention to the letter on page 4 from Jake Smith of the Western Colorado Commodore Users Group. Jake's kind words about our little newsletter also helped convince me that it was important to keep our club alive.

Now, I am not going to pretend that we don't face some challenges in the immediate future. It is a fact that membership and attendance are down (and will continue to drop) as people are drawn away from their 8-bit machines into the (mostly) IBM world.

Right now we are at about the break even point where our income from memberships matches the expense of rent, postage, disks, and other incidentals. As Fred Earley pointed out during the December business meeting, we have a strong cash reserve. However, I would like to address this issue now before the financial situation becomes an acute problem as it did in the final months of our old club, the C&AUGW. I suggest that we begin looking for a cheap (make that free) replacement for our current location. If anything good can be said of the lower attendance, it is that our space and power requirements are much lower than they were when our club

was born. Back then, we frequently had 20 or more people in attendance and as many as 10 systems set up. Today, a room that can accomodate half those numbers would be adequate.

We also need to take a good look at our current meeting format to see if there are ways in which we can better serve the needs of our members. Here are some points to ponder: Do we shorten the meetings and, if so, what should the length be? The demos don't seem to attract a good audience any more. What topics should we be covering? Should we eliminate the demos altogether? Would we gain anything by changing the meeting day or time?

I feel sure that these topics will generate a lot of discussion at the steering committee meeting and again during our January business meeting. I would like very much to hear **YOUR** input between now and our meeting on January 10. If you don't feel comfortable voicing your opinions in front of the group, please phone me at home.

Thanks for your continued interest and support in the CUW. I am looking forward to seeing you on January 10.

**Next CUW Meeting:
Saturday, January 10
1:00 - 5:00 pm
1411 South Oliver**

Dale Lutes will demonstrate a new graphical desktop for GEOS that has IBM disk and file access functions built right in!

Your CUW Steering Committee members are:

Dale Lutes	Chair, Newsletter Editor
Jerry Shook	Vice-Chair
Marie Both	Financial Officer
Robert Bales	BBS Representative
Bob Frisbie	Member at-large
Arlen Gould	Member at-large
Don McManamey	Disk Editor
Morris Shouse	Member at-large
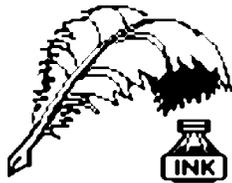
Don's Digest
by Don McManamey

Well, another year has come and gone. For me it was a very busy year. I worked overtime most of the year and helped my youngest son with his lawn mowing business. Some of the diversions I had planned never came to be or went on without me. I wanted to work on my 1956 Buick Special but did very little of that. There were some car shows that went on without me. Strangely enough, they didn't seem to miss me either. Considering the lack of progress on that old car it was probably just as well that I didn't go. Well there is another year. One thing I did not miss was the marriage of my youngest son Matt to Maria Otte. I did not get everything done there that I had planned but the wedding was right on schedule. Howard Bedient performed wonderfully on the keyboard. I now know that the marriage of your offspring is one thing that must be experienced to fully understand. I was truly choked up.

Yesterday as I traveled to Oklahoma City I heard a report of the first computer problems associated with the year 2000. This is something we have been hearing about for years now but most of us never thought these problems would show up so soon. You may recall that back in the days when computers didn't have much memory they did what ever they could to maximize that memory. One way was to use only the last two digits of the year. For example, the year 1983 was shown as 83, 1998 became 98 and so on. Now this may not appear as much of a savings but when you consider a bank and all the transactions that take place every day the memory usage adds up quickly. Several years ago the drivers license department made the change. Do you remember when an expiration date or a birthday was shown as 02-17-51 or the like? Check any legal document, drivers license, or credit card issued recently and you will find they now have a four digit number for the year.

Take a look at your favorite Commodore software which uses dates. These might include a spreadsheet, database, or even GEOS. Most of them use a two digit year. I haven't taken the time to check them out but Dale tells me GEOS uses two digits. Please contact me and let me know if you run Flex File, Swift Calc, or any other date sensitive software. What about RAMLink? We can pass our findings on at a later date. Now what if you operate another brand of computer? My Mac is ten years old but runs system 7.1 software. I can tell you without a doubt that I will not have this problem. Let's do this up right. We don't want to be down on the lowly C64. Let me know what other computer you operate at work or home and also what operating software as well as application software and if the date is shown as two digit or four digit.

Okay, I suppose I've gone on long enough. Perhaps you even forgot by now what started all this. So what was the first signs of the year 2000 syndrome? I did hint at it. Did you figure it out on your own? Stop right here and think for a moment if you are so inclined and see if you can figure it out. All right, here it is. Some poor souls recently (perhaps at Christmas time while shopping) tried to purchase something on a credit card expiring in the year 2000 only to have their card rejected because the computer used to verify the card saw only "00" and said the card had expired in 1900. You see some smaller banks and other companies with limited funds still run computers which are unable to handle the year 2000 and beyond. I find it interesting that computers came along when they did. You see, they might have had an easier solution in the year 1900 when the next digit to the left was a nine but we are coming up on an new millennium as well as a new century and so the third digit is also a zero. Just as well, the fix will last until the year 10,000 and by then, if we are still around (mankind, not you and me personally), I'm sure they will handle it just fine. Just a footnote. In case you didn't know, the year 2000 is not the beginning of a new decade, century and millennium but the end of the old. We can sit back and laugh on New Years Eve 1999 as 90% of the world rings in the new millennium a year early. Until next time, keep counting the years. You know what the alternative is and we would like you to stick around awhile longer.

Newsletter Briefs
by Dale Lutes
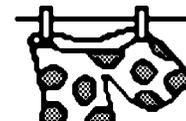
A couple of the newsletters that I usually include didn't show up this month (due to the holidays, I assume).

GOCUG Newsletter
Greater Omaha Comodore Users Group, Omaha, NE
In December, Jim Brain explains how to buy and sell Commodore equipment on the Internet with his *C= & Swap* system. I especially liked Jim's editorial on the subject "What is a Commodore Enthusiast?"

The Infinite Loop
Western Colorado Commodore Users Group, Mack, CO
Who says there is nothing new for the Commodore 8-bit machines? Jake Smith reviews some of the products for our systems which were introduced in 1997.

geoNEWS
geoClub, United Kingdom/Australia
The December issue contains part 2 of an article about *Project G* by Maurice Randall. Sharon Chambers tells us how to change the device number on a 1570 disk drive. Dave Elliott gives an overview of the CMD RAMLink with pointers on its set-up and use.

Disklosure
Salt City Commodore Club, Hutchinson, KS
In a reprint from the Hawaii Users Group, Randy Harris tells us how to make the most of CMD disk drives by using native mode partitions.

Looking at GEOS
by Mark McGuinnis

[Editor's note: This article was first published in February 1993.
It comes to us courtesy of Peter Hunt, geoClub OZ]

Let's continue our discussion on printers. As mentioned before GEOS supports over 70 different printers and a file called a "printer driver" is needed to activate your printer. The system disk that came with your GEOS package should contain printer driver files and there should be a file to cover your specific printer. If your printer is not listed, then your next best bet is to try a driver listed under your printers brand name (Epson, Star, Okidata etc.). Don't forget about your printer interface. Some interfaces have dip switches that must be set in order to make the printer work right. About all that can be said in this space is to refer to your printer manual and experiment. The GEOS manual notes that the printer is always addressed as device #4 on the serial bus, turn off any auto line - feed settings on the printer and the interface card and if the interface card has a transparent mode and your printer is not working then use the transparent mode.

Activating your printer is simply a matter of opening the system disk, click on the GEOS menu and click on the select printer menu item. From the dialogue box, scroll through the printer selections and make your choice. The selected printer driver will now become the default printer driver and will be moved to the front of the printer driver list. To copy your driver to a back - up disk just move the ghost file icon to the desk top boarder, close the disk, open your work disk and move the printer icon onto the desktop. You may get some screen prompts depending on your hardware configuration. On the lower left of the desktop screen an icon for the printer will appear to let you know if a printer driver is present and if the driver is active. It should be noted that any boarder files you run across should be placed back on the desktop just as a matter of good house keeping and to ward off the GEOS bugaboos. At this juncture your printer should be good to go.

Any problem you are experiencing is more than likely a communication problem as opposed to a hardware problem. Some common problems could be interference from your TV/Monitor, Modem, or some other peripheral. The solution is to unplug the offending peripheral or move a disk drive away from the monitor. Check GEOS to make sure your input device, printer etc. is supported or set up on the program. For those annoying little quirks that seem to defy a solution, you can always bounce the problem off a club member and who knows, you may get a solution to your problem.

Before leaving our discussion of printers, I would like to pose a question. Have you ever wondered what the difference was between a parallel interface and a serial interface? A parallel interface transfers data one character or code at a time, and a serial interface transfers data one bit at a time.

Exiting GEOS. There is a right way to exit GEOS and the procedure should be followed religiously or the GEOS monster may get you. It may get you anyway. "If you wish to turn the computer off:

1. Exit the current application and return to the desk top.
2. Position the pointer over the close icon on the disk note pad and click.

The file icons on the disk note pad will disappear and the disk drive icon representing the disk drive containing the program disk will appear with a question mark inside" Take your disk out the drives and shut down.

## Rear View Mirror
by Moe Shouse

Well another year has gone by and our Commodore club is still going strong! If you don't think so then listen to this. Jerry says that he counted 22 people at our Christmas party! Now I think that is a good turn out for a computer system that is long out of production, and forgotten by most. But we do have one company that still believes in Commodore computers. I just love to type the name Commodore. Commodore, Commodore, Commodore. OK, enough jokes.

Two weeks before Christmas, I got a letter from Creative Micro Designs telling me "We are proud to announce that we are about to start production on the long awaited SuperCPU-128 accelerator for the Commodore C-128 computer." The catch is they need my money before December 31. Don't they know it's Christmas, and money is in short supply! They also offered the 2 meg REU for $99. That is a $40 saving. But all I have is enough for the SuperCPU-128 with the RAMCard and no RAM. So I get a money order and send it off. But what does "about to start production" mean? Is that next week? Next month? Or three months? After all, it was about 2 years ago that they announced the product. But they have had a number of hurdles, and they have told us how it was going in their magazine, *Commodore World.* What?!!!! You don't subscribe? How can you call yourself a Commodore lover and not subscribe? Commodore, Commodore, Commodore. I looooove it!!!!!!!!

If you like to write computer code, *Commodore World* has had some articles on the 65C816 CPU that the SuperCPU-128 uses. If you don't know, the 65C816S is also used in the Apple 2GS, and the Super Nintendo. "So what?" you say. Well someone might be able to make a hardware hack to our SuperCPU-128 to run Super Nintendo games. Now that would be something the XXX brand clones can't do!!! Also if you don't know the 65C816S will run as an 8-bit CPU or a 16-bit CPU. In the Apple 2GS it will run the older Apple 2 software (8-bit), or run the newer Apple 2GS software (16-bit). I think the 816 on the end of the number comes from 8-bit, 16-bit. In the unit CMD is making, it will run 16-bit if it is working internal, or 8-bit if working with external circuits. This is why its work gets done 22 times faster while it is only running 10 times faster. A standard 128 runs at 2 megahertz. The SuperCPU-128 runs at 20 megahertz clock speed. If you think the way I capitalized SuperCPU-128 is strange it is just how CMD does it. Commodore, Commodore, Commodore!!!!!!!!!!!
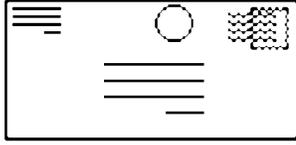
Letter to the Editor

November 11, 1997

Dear Dale,

Many thanks for adding the 'Newsletter Briefs' to your newsletter. I always read *The Zero Page* from front to back. I find your publication well written and quite informative. I am happy our *Infinite Loop* is an exchange member with the Commodore Users of Wichita. If it hadn't been for your new addition I wouldn't have know you only received the cover of the October edition.
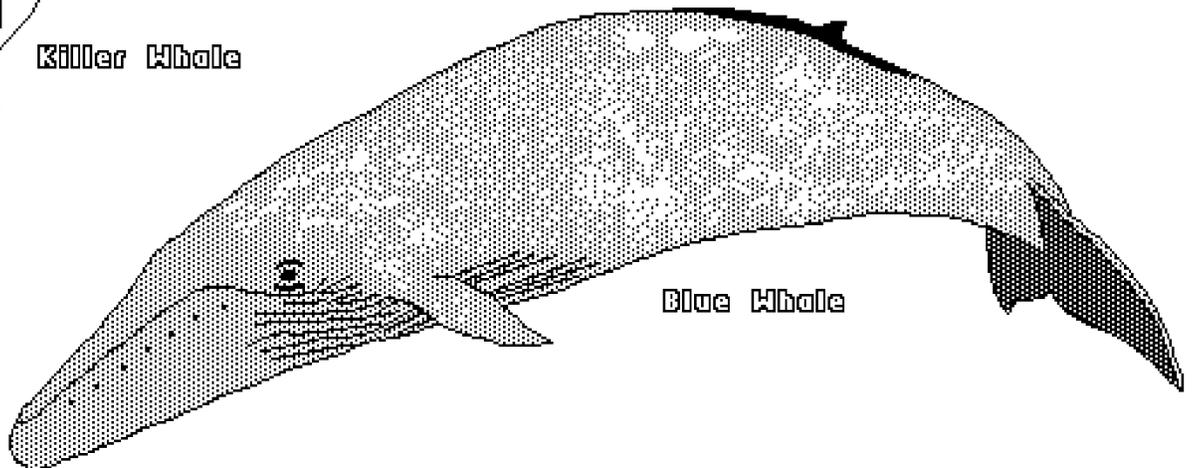
You folks are doing a great job. Keep those publications coming. We (Earl and I) hope to do the same into the 21st century and beyond. It's all of us together that keeps our little 8bit machines goin' and the discovery of new things the makers never dreamed of.

I hope you find our *Infinite Loop* newsletter interesting and informative. Any comments, if any, will be welcome. I copied you a new replacement. Enjoy. If there's anything else we may do for you, please let me know.

Sincerely,
Jake Smith

Predictions from the Experts

"But what... is it good for?"
-- *Engineer at the Advanced Computing Systems Division of IBM, 1968, commenting on the microchip.*

"Everything that can be invented has been invented."
-- *Charles H. Duell, Commissioner, U.S. Office of Patents, 1899*

"Computers in the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons."
-- *Popular Mechanics, 1949*

"I think there is a world market for maybe five computers."
-- *Thomas Watson, chairman of IBM, 1943*

"I have traveled the length and breadth of this country and talked with the best people, and I can assure you that data processing is a fad that won't last out the year."
-- *The editor in charge of business books for Prentice Hall, 1957*

"There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home."
-- *Ken Olson, president, chairman and founder of Digital Equipment Corporation, 1977*

"So we went to Atari and said, 'Hey, we've got this amazing thing, even built with some of your parts, and what do you think about funding us? Or we'll give it to you. We just want to do it. Pay our salary, we'll come work for you.' And they said, 'No.' So then we went to Hewlett-Packard, and they said, 'Hey, we don't need you. You haven't got through college yet.'"
-- *Apple Computer Inc. co-founder Steve Jobs on attempts to get Atari and HP interested in his and Steve Wozniak's personal computer.*

"640K ought to be enough for anybody."
-- *Bill Gates, 1981*

Killer Whale

Blue Whale

Graphics courtesy of Peter Hunt, geoClub OZ

The Helping Hand

This column lists those users willing to share their experiences and knowledge with other club members.
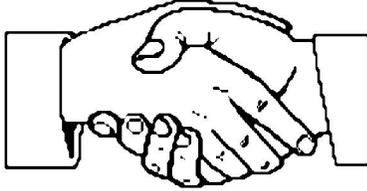
Robert Bales   831-0008
Telecommunications, Internet, CMD HD and FD drives

Dale Lutes   721-0835
GEOS, Programming, Word Processing, Desktop Publishing, CMD FD drives and RAMLink

Don McManamey   265-2560
Word Processing, Print Shop, Printing

Jerry Shook   776-2683
Databases, Label Making, Word Processing, Printing

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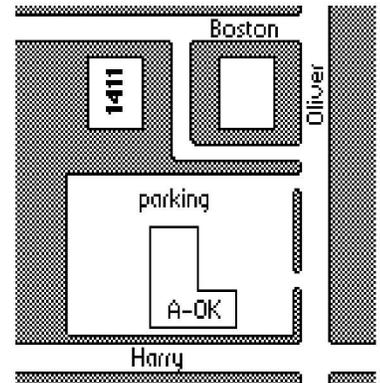
You may join or renew your membership by mail. Complete this form and mail with a check payable to:

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) _____