

A Beta Tester's Trials and Tribulations

In mid October I signed up to be an OS4 Beta tester so that I could demo my 600 MHz G3 AmigaOne running AmigaDOS 4.0 Beta at our club's annual show. I then began receiving lots of email on a daily basis from the other Beta testers along with some information about what I would need to do to prepare my machine for Beta testing. There were two things that I needed.

The first was a Voodoo 3 graphics card. The graphics library is apparently one of the last remaining pieces of the operating system being ported to the power PC platform. This means that there are no drivers yet for the modern video cards that the operating system will be supporting.

Not being up to date on the more traditional PC platforms, I assumed that I would have no trouble finding a Voodoo 3 graphics card. That was a bad assumption. I quickly discovered that the Voodoo 3 has not been manufactured for several years and that calling the traditional stores was not going to be of much use. I then began calling some of the used computer outlets and was finally able to find one. I think I bought the only one available in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

The second thing that I needed was the latest copy of the boot ROM. I received my AmigaOne in January 2003. It contained a December 2002 version of the boot ROM. I needed a September 2003 version of the ROM. The ROM in the AmigaOne can apparently be

updated electronically. I received an email containing an archive of the latest ROM. I attempted to follow the instructions for updating it. The good news is that I did not trash my existing ROM. The bad news is that I was never able to update it and change its version.

But I was not ready to give up yet. If I could not seem to update the ROM electronically, then I figured I could certainly update it physically. So I contacted my dealer and ordered a new boot ROM. The ROM arrived in the mail on a Saturday and I removed the cover from my system and broke out my PLCC (plastic leaded chip carrier) chip puller. This device is designed to remove chips like the boot ROM from their sockets. It has two prongs which fit into opposite corners between the chip and the socket. You then begin squeezing it together, and it will lift the chip from the socket. I was appalled to discover that this tool was completely useless. One of the expansion sockets is so close to the boot ROM socket that it is impossible to get the tool into position to extract the ROM.

I was then forced to try removing the ROM by prying it up from alternate corners. I quickly discovered that I needed a little more room to work in and decided to remove the motherboard from the case. Then, in the process of prying up on one

corner of the ROM, I saw the ROM socket start to come up off of the motherboard. At this point I panicked. I figured that I had probably ruined the socket/motherboard, and I set it aside until I could contact my dealer for some advice. My dealer said that if the socket had not been completely torn from the motherboard, then it would probably be all right if I were very careful with it in installing the new ROM. So, I continued on and put the new ROM in and attempted to put my system back together.

It was now several days since I had removed the motherboard from the system, and I quickly discovered that I should have taken some notes as to exactly where all those connectors were supposed to be plugged into the motherboard. Eventually, I got my system to the point where I could turn it on. The good news is that the boot ROM was working and was the correct version.

The bad news is that my system was very unstable. I booted the system, and it would report that I had a 40 gigabyte hard disk and a CD/RW disk drive. The next time I booted it, it would report that I had a 40 gigabyte hard disk and no CD/RW drive. The next time I booted it, it would report that I had a 40 gigabyte removable hard disk. At this point I did not know what to do and decided that this was beyond my level of ex-

pertise. So I boxed up my system, and sent it off to be repaired.

I not giving up on my AmigaOne or on trying to demo OS4 at one of our club's meetings, but I do have several observations to make. The first is that one should make very careful notes when removing motherboards from their enclosures. You may think that you will be able to remember where things go when you try to put it back together 20 minutes later. But that 20 minutes may turn into days, and by that time you might not be able to remember exactly where everything goes. The other has to do with the motherboard itself. The positioning of the boot ROM's socket in relation to the expansion slots makes it impossible to use a tool designed to remove

the boot ROM. In addition I feel very strongly that the boot ROM socket should never have been surface mounted to the motherboard because that makes it too easy for the socket to pull away from the motherboard. I feel the designers of the motherboard should be taken out and strung up by their thumbs for not having the foresight to see that things like this could be a problem.

...Ned Kelly

AmigaMCCC News

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November Calendar

November 10 — Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:30 pm — University Center, Pedernales Room
W. First St. & S. West St., Arlington

November 10 — MCCC Board of Director's Meeting
Approx. 10:00 pm — TGI Fridays
Cooper Street just south of I-20, Arlington

November 20 — Amiga North Dallas Chapter
7:30 pm — Junkins Building, SMU
Dyer and Airline Extension Rd., Dallas

November 22 — Newsletter Deadline — 7:00 am

What About Nudists?

If lawyers are disbarred and ministers unfrocked, perhaps...

- electricians get delighted
- Far Eastern diplomats disoriented
- cashiers distilled alpine climbers dismounted
- piano tuners unstrung
- orchestra leaders disbanded
- artists' models deposed
- cooks deranged
- nudists redressed
- office clerks defiled
- mediums dispirited
- dressmakers unbiased.