New Technology

It's been a hot month around here, with temperatures soaring into the nineties. This kind of weather can be a bit of a drag on people, and occasionally on computers. I'm pleased to say all the systems around here are functioning fine, or at least as well as they ever do.

It's been fun examining the world of technology. Not long ago my father got a new car, replacing one declared totaled in an accident. The car, a Chevy Malibu, has a full set of automated features, such as sensors that turn the headlights on and off without your input, beeps and bells to remind you to wear your seat belt and make sure you don't leave a door ajar or leave keys in the wrong place, and a display to help you know how many miles you can go on what gasoline you have left in the tank. I figure it won't be too many years before GPS navigation systems are cheap enough that most new cars come with them as standard equipment as well. It's got me thinking about all the other things, such as powered steering and brakes, air bags, and radio/CD/MP3 players that were uncommon years back, but pretty commonly found in modern cars nowadays. I can't help but wonder if ten to twenty years from now, people will speculate on how difficult it must have been for people in the "bad old days" when most cars didn't have auto-navigation and built-in proximity sensors for robotic parking. A lot more cars may be running on hybrid, alcohol, hydrogen fuels or electricity

by then as well, but that's something for another time. I'll be busy fiddling with various toys which happen to include MP3 players, speakers, and light shows.

In the world of the Amiga-esque systems, there's been some talk about the eventually-upcoming Efika 2. For anyone still unfamiliar, the Efika is a tiny (mini-ITX) computer motherboard based on a PowerPC "system on a chip" architecture, running around 400 Mhz. The specs aren't anything to get excited about from a desktop system perspective, but the system itself is technically designed for low-power, low-heat embedded uses. Low demand operating systems (like Amiga-style OSes) can get a lot of use out such a system, limited though it may be. I'm thinking of getting one myself, largely because the small size and ability to (eventually) run MorphOS and other Amiga-esque operating systems makes an ideal portable platform for taking to meetings and possibly other functions. I'm waiting until MorphOS 2.0 (and its Efika support) is released before buying one, and at this point I might be waiting for the Efika 2 as well. The 2 is expected to have some fixes and updates (I believe a built-in video card is on the menu, for example), similar to what the Pegasos 2 had to offer over the original Peg. I can't say when, but I hope to bring an Efika system of some description, running MorphOS and possibly AROS as well, to many AmiTech meeting in the future.

Finally, I'd like to alert our readers

of a little project taken up by a few group members. There are simple adapters out there, which allow one to connect a Compact Flash memory card to a standard IDE header, (versions are available for 40 pin 3.5 inch or 44 pin 2.5 inch connectors, but our main interest is the 44 pin one for now), allowing the flash card to be used as an IDE hard drive. This is a good option for A600, A1200, and other IDE-based systems, as it has lower heat and power consumption than a hard drive, needs no spin-up time, and a 1 to 4 gigabyte card is plenty large for many Amiga uses. Jim Lawrence is taking the lead on getting several 44-pin IDE to CF adapters, so be sure to let him know if you want to get any (or bring money in case he's got some at the meeting.) We are also looking to organize a buy of inexpensive Compact Flash cards, so be sure to get in on that if you want to get in on that. I'll see you all at the meeting. Hopefully the weather won't be too hot.

…Eric Schwartz
AmiTech-Dayton Gazette, August

The State of Broadband

06/19/2007
Here's more evidence that the U.S. is a second-rate nation when it comes to broadband — Australia just announced a plan to bring broadband to 99% of its citizens in two years. And the country's only criticism of the plan is this: It will only have a minimum speed of 12 Mbps, and it's too little, too late. So

reports the Sidney Morning Herald. Compare that with our pitiful broadband showing. As I reported in my blog yesterday, when it comes to broadband, we're 24th worldwide, with broadband penetration at an anemic 53%.

Reading the Australian pol's criticism of their plan is somewhat surrealistic, considering that our government refuses to spend money for broadband deployment, or require telcos to provide it. In Australian cities, broadband speeds will be up to 70 Mbps, while in the distant rural areas, it will be 12 Mbps — far faster than just about all broadband in the U.S. Says Australian labour leader Kevin Rudd, "The government proposes a two-tier system. A good system for the cities, they say, and a second-rate system for rural & regional Australia."

Right now, I'd be more than happy with a second-rate speed of 12 Mbps…how about you?

06/26/2007 — 7:00am
If you need any more evidence that U.S. broadband is anemic at best, here's another one: The Communications Workers of America (CWA) has just released a report ranking us 16th in broadband speeds and connectivity among industrialized nations. According to a Computerworld report, "the median real-time download speed in the U.S. is 1.9Mbit/sec., compared with 61Mbit/sec. in Japan, 45Mbit/sec. in South Korea, 17Mbit/sec. in France and 7Mbit/sec. in Canada." Not only are our speeds pitifully slow, but we pay more for them. The Computerworld article notes that in Japan, people pay about $30 per month for

AmigaMCCC News

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September Calendar

September 10 — Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
        7:00 pm — Grand Prairie Public Library
        901 Conover Drive, Grand Prairie

September 10 — MCCC Board of Director's Meeting
        Approx. 9:15 pm — Location TBD

September 29 — Newsletter Deadline — 7:00 am

50Mbit/sec. access. By way of contrast, in the U.S., we pay $20 for about 1Mbit/sec. service and $30 to $40 for about 4Mbit/sec. service.

As I've previously written, we also lag the world when it comes to broadband penetration as well. We're a mediocre 24th in the world. Congress may take action to improve on all that. Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii) has introduced a bill to require that the federal government better track true broadband use, something the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has refused to do. That bill will only be the first step; next will come pressure to ensure better broadband access for all.

…Preston Gralla