

## Changing Paradigms

It's been a busy month so far, even though it's not even half over as of this writing. There's the Easter weekend and the income tax season. Luckily I got my income tax work mostly out of the way in March, save for a few loose ends (in this case mailing out the paperwork related to my tele-filed state taxes). I am, however, still in progress on helping out my father with his income taxes. I'm hoping he knows something I don't, as the early drafts of the tax forms look to have an expensive result. On a related note, there won't be a President's column this week, so I hope you all can survive without.

There has even been some Amiga-related news this month. A fair amount of press (Amiga press, anyway) has been thrown around announcing the Amiga 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Vintage Computer Festival happening in the UK. That's right, this year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the release of the original Amiga 1000, in all its 256K, keyboard garage glory. Makes you feel (more) old, doesn't it? A few things slated to show at this UK gathering include the AmigaOne X1000 and Timberwolf (the most recent incarnation of a Mozilla/Firefox Amiga porting project) with more things possibly to be announced later. Sounds like an interesting time, even if it's overseas. Finally, on the outskirts of the Amiga subject, the Research in Motion corporation, better known as the people behind the Blackberry smartphone, recently bought out QNX. For those who don't remember, QNX were partnered with Amiga Inc. For some time, providing the OS software base for their "Amiga Anywhere"

projects, vaunted (mostly by Amiga Inc., not much by anyone else) to be the second coming, scaling from phones and mobile devices to desktop computers with a hypothetical "Amiga OS5." The story mentioned the QNX software being applied to embedded applications, such as computers in cars and the like, though the combo of Blackberry and QNX seems to hold more promise than that of QNX and Amiga Inc.

As usual, I've been thinking and musing about various computer-related stuff. I've written in the past about the march of technology toward smaller and smaller devices that are more and more powerful, though I recently find myself more fascinated with how consumers can either follow the flow or do something less expected. Home computers started with the desktop boxes, and then the laptops came along. Laptops were not as powerful as desktop machines, but were portable and let people get some work done on the road, at least the basic necessary stuff. Nowadays the gulf between the laptops and the desktops is not so obvious. Desktops are still more powerful, cheaper, or both compared to similar laptops, if only because they don't need to fit all hardware inside a slim portable case, but the average laptop is powerful enough for almost anyone who isn't a bleeding-edge gamer or in some other field that requires more gigabytes or gigahertz than most, to the point where it's not uncommon for people to have one or more laptops as their primary home systems, with no desktop boxes in sight. Still, as great and portable as laptops are, there was a need for smaller computing devices, and the "palmtop" computers, "PDAs", and related devices were born. Like the laptops in their infancy, these handheld computing devices were less powerful,

geared toward simpler but necessary applications, like note-taking and address books. Unlike the laptops, they had a wide variety of interfaces and input methods, dictated in part by their smaller size, where the conventional keyboard and mouse don't work so well. Palmtop/PDA methods ranged from short-form versions of larger computers to touch screens and pen-based interfaces pioneered by devices like the Apple Newton and popularized by the palm pilot and its descendants.

Like the laptops before them, the handheld devices are much more powerful and capable, and very different from the organizers of old. Most notably, they merged with another ubiquitous handheld device, the cellphone, creating the Internet-connected "smartphone," as well as handling the functions of other portable electronics, such as music players or handheld games. It's possible to do as much if not more than a laptop could not that many years ago, all in the palm of your hand. They haven't quite supplanted laptops in the same way laptops pushed aside desktops, though they have taken much of the niche laptops had in their earlier days. There is one more niche though, recently discovered — that of the "somewhere in-between." This is, at least for now, the domain of the "netbook," a smaller low-end laptop primarily for Internet surfing and (relatively) low-demand applications. One might think, being neither laptop nor palmtop, and not really that much less expensive than some laptops, that they wouldn't be that popular, and yet they are, in part for being more portable than the average laptop, yet offering the size and real estate to operate standard apps more comfortably than on a 3-inch palm-sized screen. This line is currently in

the infancy the others went through, so who knows exactly what the future result will be. A first possible evolution is on the way in the form of Apple's iPad, which is half upsized iPhone/iPod touch and half Apple's play at the electronic book reader and netbook markets. Still, it brings the iPhone touch interface and applications to a greater amount of screen real estate, making a wider variety of "standard" computer applications possible, or at least easier, applied to the new interface. It could become a whole new paradigm and change the whole computing world, or just be a detour along the way to the future. I guess we'll find out based on how smug Steve Jobs looks in the future.

...by Eric Schwartz  
from the AmiTech Gazette, April 2010

# Adventures with AROS

Yes, it has been a long time since I've written anything for the newsletter. One of the bad side effects of a down economy is the increased workload of those left doing the work. Time that I used to have investigating the intricacies of computers is now spent on much less rewarding pursuits (job). Besides, the world I used to know, desktop computers, is going the way of fossil fuels and heading toward a hand-held, mobile future. All that is fine I guess and I am participating in it somewhat, but it still lacks that satisfying control I have at the desk. I have an iPod Touch and as much as I enjoy Apple kicking Microsoft's ass in the mobile arena, I

can't help but feel Jobs is shooting for the "Next Great Satan," at least until he drops dead. I'll give him credit for ushering in possibly the next great paradigm shift in computing, the iPad, but the jury is still out on that one. Bonus points for shifting discussion away from telephones (boring) and iPods (ditto) that dominate the otherwise interesting Apple podcasts. Therefore, I will declare that what is left of the desktop is now in the domain of Amiga.

Whenever I look for something to demo at the meeting, I check in to see the state of affairs for AROS. AROS used to be an operating system that I could rely on to boot on the most modest of PC hardware. I enjoyed the fact that a useless PC in the Microsoft world got a new lease on life in AROS's. Unfortunately, they changed something in the code and I found increased difficulty to even get a machine up. There are postings stating DMA is at fault and can be disabled at boot up, but many machines I tried just failed and I set aside AROS for a year to let it mature a bit more. Recently, a friend of mine gave me a decent spec laptop with a 2.66 MHz P4 and 1.25 Gigs of ram and I thought I'd visit AROS again before I put some version of Linux back on it.

At the meeting I brought in the laptop and the latest version of AROS. Based on my previous experience with installing AROS, I went straight to HDtoolbox and used it to partition and format my drive to Amiga filesystem. It is hardly an intuitive experience and printed instructions by your side are necessary. I managed to fumble my way

through the process and ended up with a drive with Amiga filesystem and bootable bits set. I did the suggested reboot and went about installing the OS.

After the reboot, I clicked the "Install OS" button and it became obvious that the previous HDtoolbox work was all for naught. I had very few options and decided to go with the default "use the whole drive" and "Smart Filesystem (SFS)." I was taken back a bit with the SFS Filesystem bit at first but was happy with ability to use the higher performance filesystem option. I was even happier with the amazing speed that the SFS formatted. I recall spending hours formatting drives with the old FFS. I don't miss that a bit. With the drive formatted, time to install the system. That went surprising well and was quite fast within the posted time of about 20 minutes. The only part that threw me off was that I also checked off the "install development tools" option that was not calculated in the install times and added another 15 minutes. Fortunately, the whole process was completed right before the computer meeting ended. To my amazement, the machine booted right up without any issues at all. The part that irritates me is that I could not get the laptop to boot into its native resolution and was limited to the default VESA 640x480 screen in 16 bits. I messed around with a lot of boot settings and those resulted in a black screen. I'll dig through AROS docs and see if anything will work.

...by James Lawrence  
from the AmiTech Gazette, April 2010

<h2>June Calendar</h2>	
<p>June 7 — Amiga-By-The-Loop Chapter 7:00 PM — Main Grand Prairie Library 901 Conover Drive, Grand Prairie</p>	<p>June 7 — MCCC Board of Director's Meeting Approximately 9:15 PM — Location TBD</p> <p>June 26 — Newsletter Deadline — 7:00 AM</p>
<p><b>MCCC    4418 Sharpsburg Drive    Grand Prairie, Texas 75052</b> <b><a href="http://www.amigamccc.org">http://www.amigamccc.org</a></b></p>	