

Adventures With An A500

June 6, 2014

After doing some more tinkering I did make my objective of making a disk image that would self boot and have a term program on it.

Basically did what Johnny would eventually advise me to do by taking a copy of the 1.3 Workbench disk (bear in mind I'm working with images, not actual disks, which is nice) and I deleted ALL the utilities. Then I copied over A-Term, which is a simple Term program with VT100 support, no ANSI graphics, and up to 38.8K in speed.

But it worked basically pretty well.

The next thing I want to do is get this Amiga 500 working more stably.

At the moment the video over the 520 A/V module is clear at some times, and has interference at other times.

The terminal text is a bit blurry, but then that might be the quality of the A/V for the early Amiga. I do notice that there are a lot of Scan Doublers on ebay. Was this supposed to fix the text being blurry?

Also, my keys are locked in a weird configuration. If I hit the

key for “:” I get some weird character. I have to actually hold down ALT, SHIFT, then “:” to get the “:” character.

And for some reason, while my other keys are alright, my z and y are switched. Weird stuff.

But I wanted to let all know I made some progress with the Amiga 500.

In my messages with people from the club and those offering help (thanks Howard and Johnny and others) I was given a message asking why I don't pick up a better Amiga.

Well, I just might do that in the future I'm sure. I am learning the Amiga at a VERY basic level which has been great. I had both an Amiga 2000 and Amiga 3000 in the past and both were machines that already had quite a setup. I've had the joy of running an Amiga 3000 with OS 3.9, and even an Ethernet card. So that goal was met.

At the moment the goal is to see if I can get some use out of this Amiga 500. A friend gave this to me sometime last year originally claiming it was a 1200. Got it home and realized rather than having a high end Amiga I had a low end Amiga. I razzed him about it over e-mail, but thanked him for the 500. And that was the last I heard from him. He died about a week later.

So I would like to see, out of fun, what it would take to bring a 500 up to par with 1200. Naturally the 1200 is built for what it does from the ground up, and the motherboard of the 500 is an older design, but then I don't need the 500 to do everything the 1200 does.

Though I have considered just putting the internals of a 1200 in the 500 case and being done with it.

Just kidding of course.

June 11, 2014

A bit more progress:

Currently trying to perfect the video image. The 520 Genlock was blurry on my Samsung SyncMaster 150MP, which normally does pretty good with RF and A/V signals. However, taking some advice from Chris Long and Johnny, the 520 module was apparently designed for more of an actual video monitor. While I have a 1084 monitor, I didn't feel like pulling out that monstrosity, but luckily I have a really nice and small Video monitor that I received with a Vic 20 once.

The video has been crisp and clear.

Been using A-Term, which is the term program I got to work on the bootable 1.3 disk. Basically no ANSI emulation. Sounds like

NComm might be the way to go, but it needs a key. Found the key, now just need to transfer that to the Amiga. See if I can get a null modem setup and transfer that over. This is a work in progress.

The next hurdle is color. How do you turn on color?

June 12, 2014

Never mind. After playing with another A520 module, I have color!

June 12, 2014

Well, I learned that not all A520 modules are created equal. Yes there are PAL and NTSC versions of them.

I picked up two a while back. “Man, Greg, you must be loaded to buy two of something.” No...actually. I bought a module for a nice price from across the pond, and later I get this notification of “you won!” And I was thinking “I already paid for the A520...aw nuts.”

There was this OTHER A520 in Canada that I bid on, not nearly as reasonable, but not too too bad. So I shelled a bit more than expected. A good thing in the end. On the RF end the two are different at the end. The PAL version has “L” and “H” and the NTSC version has “3” and “4.”

The PAL version mostly works in black and white and sometimes color, sometimes blurry. It is understandably confused and was the one I was using at the last meeting. Maybe one day I might figure out what it takes to make it an NTSC module (changing out some parts perhaps?)

And the NTSC works great! Thought it was about it being an LCD monitor verses traditional video monitor. Nope, all about the PAL vs. NTSC. The NTSC works fine on whatever A/V display.

June 15, 2014

Here was the setup a few days ago. Been fun. I maxed out what I could do with NComm-Jr, Ncomm2, and in the end had a term program that could do ANSI well but slow, and another that did most but not enough of the ANSI and at a good speed. So I decided to take this to the next level.

Got with Ned, got an actual floppy of the 1.3 Workbench desk, and decided to try what Chris said on taking the Gotek virtual drive and putting it in the external drive.

Of course this was finally the time to take the computer and scrub it down real good and clean out all the dust and grime of sitting for years and years.

So in various stages of testing I have this:



I got a floppy drive working to load the 1.3 workbench, and that allows me to load images externally that did not have a boot system. I was able to load NComm Jr 3.05 (pretty close to the latest version) and I can tell that it will have the ANSI emulation and the speed that will be nice.

However the program is looking for fonts on the DF0 drive and this on the DF1 drive. I tried to go and see if I could change the preferences in the program to see the DF1 drive, but no dice. Challenges, challenges.

Tinkering with the floppy drive today I wonder how we ever got anything done in the 90s. Man, what a finicky drive. Those didn't age well. I have a second Virtual drive on the way and it should be here about July 1st from China. But the plan is, two virtual drives, and update the Kickstart to 3.1 so I can select the drives and set up ROM images that way.

That said, I just have a few questions tonight for those up for some questions:

1) How do you set the clock? What is the command and how does it work? I realized on the trap door slot I have a 512K RAM module with RAM clock. Need to confirm (though it probably is) that the battery is in fact dead. But out of all the basics and lack of accessories that this computer came with, including

lack of a Fat Agnus or other ECS chips, at least I have 1 meg of RAM to play with.

2) I believe I have a Revision 3 motherboard. I have seen 3.1 Kickstart chips for Revision 6a motherboards. If anyone can tell me what they might have heard on getting a 3.1 Kickstart in the Revision I would be interested in hearing it.

3) Ahhh, here is a fun one. If you have a disk images, an .adf, that has the smallest most minimal boot up system you can think of, I would be interested in playing with that.

June 16, 2014

So while I was talking on IRC to some other Amiga folk, we got to talk about accelerators for the Amiga 500. One person had a 68030 50 mhz accelerator and that reminded me of a time when I had an AdSpeed on the Atari ST. Oh... but wait. I recently acquired an ST with AdSpeed again. Then I got to thinking... both have the 68000 — the plug in module is basically just a board that goes in the 68K slot. You have a hardware switch, you run drivers to boost the computer to double speed.

Could ICD have made the same production model for both the Amiga and ST? LOL — probably.

So I took the AdSpeed out of the ST and plugged it into the Amiga. Runs just like a standard 68K in non-accelerated mode.

So I figure what needs to happen is the software drivers need to be in place. Thanks to the Amiga folk in the IRC they found the information on the AdSpeed in a Internet archive:

https://web.archive.org/web/20120623073821/http://amiga.resource.cx/exp/adspeed#s_adspeed

I was able to download the drivers with a .dms file extension to my virtual drive through a local BBS. Just easier than trying to figure out a null modem connection with an Intel Mac.

I was leery of the .dms file since I had never heard of a .dms — and sure enough the Amiga didn't know what it was, or at least I should say Workbench 1.3 did not know.

I found a reference to it and it seems .dms was some kind of script that would need to be “unpacked” by another file? Here was the forum message on it if interested:

<http://www.amiga.org/forums/showthread.php?t=41711>

So, if up for a challenge, here are the files. The first two are the AdSpeed Drivers — basically the same but one was the update of the other. The other file is a dms run file that is described in the message. If you are able to pull an honest file out of the dms files I will applaud your efforts. And we will get to see if the ST AdSpeed is, in fact, the same AdSpeed as the Amiga version. Honestly I think they are the same, just a sticker slapped over it that said either “Amiga” or “ST.” But an Amiga 500 running at 14 mhz would be nice.

And why they could not have made the program a straight up executable and not a dms file is beyond me.

June 17, 2014

Thanks to the instructions of Johnny and some on eab.abime.net, I got it to work. (The .dms extractor that is.) The Adspeed drivers did not recognize the Adspeed module. Oh well — it was worth a try.

June 23, 2014

My accomplishment of the evening, getting the 3.1 ROM working in my Rev 3 Amiga 500. Soldering required.

And naturally I loved that the two-button startup trick for choosing a startup disk came up.



June 28, 2014

Last week I installed the Kickstart 3.1 chip. This week added this mod:

<http://eab.abime.net/showthread.php?t=70915>

That gives the Amiga 500 (or other Amigas) 8 MB and built in IDE/Compact Flash.

I put in a 2 GB compact flash (Toshiba), made two partitions. (Forgot how long it took to format a 1 GB partition.)

June 29, 2014

Today has been victorious, with some negatives. My power supply went out. Thinking of building a new power supply from an old computer power supply (the specs are online) along with the connector from the now dead power supply.

That aside, I am running into a lot of incompatibility issues. Seems like some games really didn't stay compatible long. One or two Kickstart upgrades and the games broke. Been fun trying to get some images working.

There are two basic areas I am finding challenging where input would be appreciated:

1) Icons. How do you make them? I understand that not everything needs an icon. I'll go with that, though if they all did copying would be SOOOOO much easier. That said, how to make an icon once you establish a program you want to load on a regular basis?

I tried a bringing over a file from an LZH archive called "Addicon" from AmiNet which I uncompressed, sent all the files over, and the program still doesn't work. Was supposed to run under 3.1 Workbench.

2) I am trying to get a terminal program to run. I have copied all information from the old location (font folder on the disk) to the new similar location (font folder on the hard drive). The term program says it cannot locate the user font. There must be a config file that needs modifying with the new font location. Any idea where you can find config files and what program can edit them?

Remember, I can work with .adf files great, and everything else is a crap shoot.

June 30, 2014

Well, thanks to some advice from Ned, Johnny, and Dave, I was able to navigate the Workbench and figure how to "view all icons" from

the GUI, and that made things a lot easier for me.

After that I must have played with about six term programs until settling on Terminus, which is just amazing. After talking to some folks on the #Team*Amiga IRC, I was able to get a keyfile to unlock all the features.

I also downloaded some serial drivers to increase the speed from a stable 19.2K to a stable 38.4K baud.

So software and all things are in place.

Some things I want to do in the future are:

1) Find ways to play games that would have run better before I upgraded from the 1.3 Kickstart ROM.

2) Get a good mod player.

But for now, I have some BBS calling to do, and a power supply to build for the Amiga from a old ATX power supply.

I just wanted to thank those that helped, and give an update on the progress.

...Greg Goodwin, MCCC VP

July Calendar

July 7 — Amiga-By-The-Loop Chapter
7:30 PM — Main Grand Prairie Library
901 Conover Drive, Grand Prairie

July 7 — Board of Director's Meeting
Approximately 9:15 PM — Location TBD

July 28 — Newsletter Deadline — 8:00 AM

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<http://www.amigamccc.org>