



# MCCC News



Fort Worth

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Dallas

## Vampires, Tablets and Remembering 40 Years

Welcome to what is apparently summer. I've written previously about how this has been a year of poor luck for me so far in a number of ways. One of those seems to be the way of tech-related frustration. I continue to be jerked around on my quest for a Vampire card for my Amiga 600, with me sitting around waiting for news about my order that never seems to come. At least now the Apollo Accelerators team will be selling Vampire cards through the AmigaKit web store now, so I'll probably be looking to that route for any future Vampire-related purchases. For that matter, I might go that route even sooner if I can't get any info from Kipper in the near future.

My Linux laptop, on which I do the majority of my Internet stuffs, has been having keyboard troubles lately. It started out with the "M" key, which became less sensitive, requiring a good, firm press to register, which really takes the flow out of typing when you have to confirm that a letter actually made it from keyboard to screen. It got worse, and attempts to fix the problem didn't help any, until the key was nearly useless. I decided to edit the keymap, swapping "M" with the previously mostly un-

used Windows menu key. This did the job, but I noticed a few other keys were starting to get iffy like "M" was at the start. Since I would run out of spare unused keys quickly, I bought a new small USB keyboard (small so it could sit on the laptop without draping over the side) with a USB passthrough for my mouse. Things are working well so far, and we shall see how things go in the longer term.

Recently, after making some money in Columbus, I stopped by venerable Micro Center and came home with a new Samsung Galaxy Tab S3 tablet to replace my aging Galaxy Note. The S3 is a newer model, seemingly in competition with the likes of the iPad pro. There's a lot I like about it more than my previous tablet, and some things I don't like as much. To give an example, while the S3 comes with a pen as standard, the pen can't store on the body of the smaller, thinner tablet like my old S-pen, requiring the pen to be left separate, or placed in a space on a protective case for the tablet (which I planned to do). The upside is, without needing to cram into a tiny storage alcove, the pen is allowed to be the size of an actual pen, rather than a little golf pencil stylus thing. Sadly, whether thanks to my own negligence prior to getting a protective case, or the new tablet's slight build, which feels like a waxed pamphlet in-hand, my S3 already got a hairline crack across the screen less than a week after I bought it, and

will need to be repaired. I've tried to get in touch with Samsung service, but it's looking like this won't be covered under warranty. In hindsight, I guess I should have gone for one of those scammy buyer protection plans from the retailer, as it could have actually worked for me for once. Regardless, I'll get this thing fixed up one way or another. It works fine otherwise, but I don't feel right leaving a blemish like that uncorrected on an otherwise new piece of hardware that I haven't even really gotten to explore in-depth yet (and would rather avoid doing so until it is fixed up. By comparison, my old tablet has been (in relative terms) beat to crap with not one crack to the screen (but plenty of nicks and scratches around the casing). At least now the protective case for my new tablet has arrived, if a bit too late.

Inspired by an article run in the MCCC News. "My first 40 years of computing" by "DoctorClu," I realized my own experiences in computers and video games have lasted approximately forty years as well. It started in 1977 I believe (me 5 or 6 at the time) when my parent bought the then-new and bleeding-edge Atari VCS (AKA Atari 2600). I got a lot of enjoyment out of that wood-grain machine, and some fond memories of playing competitive games against my Dad. I loved to win against Dad, and would frequently pick games and difficulty settings

that put him at a disadvantage. When you're a small child, anything that made you feel superior to your parents was magical. I continued on the 2600 train for several years, not getting the newer machines like Intellivision, Colecovision, or Atari's 5200.

It wasn't until around 1983 that my family got its first new system, and actual home computer. I remember pushing for an Atari 400 or 800 computer, but we ended up getting the Commodore 64, with no real regrets. I recall my Dad bought the C64 at its higher introductory price, and was rather annoyed when the price dropped drastically soon after. While I played tons of games on the 64, I was also introduced to deeper uses, like BASIC programming, writing, and creating my own graphics, animations, and games.

In the meantime, I got experience with other computer systems at school, such as the Apple II and TI-994A. I would continue with the C64 at home for years, though for a few of those years I was already dreaming of using another Commodore product. In 1985 I saw articles in magazines like Compute! and Commodore's own publication about a new computer called the Amiga, which appeared several orders of magnitude beyond the C-64, or even those new-

franged Apple Lisa and Macintosh machines. After seeing the screen shots of graphics like the hi-res face of a mandrill, I was sold on the system from that point, and campaigned to get one, but Mom and Dad were less enthusiastic about an expensive, unproven computer. I would have to wait a few more years, which might have been for the best, as it gave the Amiga platform time to mature beyond its slightly awkward A-1000 phase.

I got my first Amiga, an A-500, for Christmas 1988. It came in a package deal with the memory expansion bringing it to a whopping 1 megabyte, a few software packages, and a MIDI interface with a music keyboard that it -sorta-worked with (in that you could enter notes in the computer from the keyboard, but not play back from the computer to the keyboard). I explored games of course, but explored the world of graphics and animation software even more. Some was good, some was limited, some was powerful but ill-suited to an A500 with limited memory. Animation is notorious for using a lot of memory and storage space, despite how programs like Moviesetter made the most of scant resources.

It was getting clear that I would need more room to grow, and around 1990, I upgraded to the

big box Amiga 2000, while my father inherited the A500 as a hand-me-down. The 2000 started out with similar specs to the A500, but was much easier to expand, and soon was granted more memory, and a colossal 45 megabyte hard drive, with a Supracard interface which required you to boot from a floppy disk, which turned control over to the hard drive.

As my Amiga system grew, so did the ambition of the projects I worked on, even as I drooled over the magazine articles previewing the new, fast, sleek Amiga 3000 and its new AmigaDOS 1.4 (or 2.0). I remember one article stating the A3000 could be expanded with up to 128 megabytes of RAM, which made me believe that hard drives would be made redundant. (silly me).

I graduated high school around this time, and it wouldn't be long before I would take my computer system preferences, and later the machines themselves, to college in Columbus. I'll have to cut off my tale at this point, as it's a rather long one, and I'll have to spread it across at least one more month.

...Eric Schwartz  
From the AmiTech Gazette,  
June 2017

## July Calendar

July 3 — MCCC Chapter Meeting  
7:00 PM — Grand Prairie Airport  
3116 S. Great Southwest Parkway, Grand Prairie

July 3 — Board of Director's Meeting  
Approximately 9:00 PM — Location TBD

July 31 — Newsletter Deadline — 8:00 AM

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