



September 2020

# The MCCC News

The Metroplex Commodore Computer Club

Serving Dallas/Fort Worth Since 1983

## Challenges

It's been a challenging several weeks for me, in the middle of a challenging year for the entire world. My luck seems to be unusually poor this last month or two, as I've been dealing with one equipment failure or personal injury after another. Last month I told the tale of replacing my G5 Powermac that I use to run MorphOS (and some day I intend to get the failed one running again). I'm happy to say the replacement machine behaves nicely, with perhaps a tiny bit more reliability than my previous G5 did. Whether this has anything to do with its lower clock speed or other hardware choices, I cannot say, but I refuse to look a gift horse in the mouth at this time. As much as I want to complain about all the problems I've been having, I don't exactly feel entitled to do so, as an injured knee or technology crapping out comes off like the well-worn "First World Problems" meme when viewed against a time when others are literally fighting for their lives. So while I seem to avoid death and disease for the time being, I get all the lower-tier misfortunes instead... for example dropping and cracking my current tablet.

Early this year, in the before-time, my Samsung tablet of about 4 years was well and truly broken—the kind of damage that you know would make it more practical to replace than repair, so replace was what I did, with the help of some generous benefactors. Now, after having the new tablet for five months, an acci-

dent. The tablet fell from my hands to the floor. It was partially protected by its case, but not enough, as the screen glass cracked in almost a shockwave-like pattern radiating from the corner of the casing that hit the ground. Everything else about the tablet still worked just fine and was still completely usable, aside from the fact the screen's surface has a bit more texture to it afterward. While the tablet was new enough to still be under warranty, naturally said warranty does not cover when you drop the thing. Regardless, after some back and forth, and some stressful moment regarding whether it was actually received or not, my tablet is in the hands of a Samsung service center as of this writing, to perform the repairs I paid for. If I'm lucky, and as I've already made clear I haven't been recently, I may have my tablet back in my hands in working order by the meeting. Wish me luck.

Based on my recent and past experiences with mobile technology, I'll borrow a quote from the internet's "Angry Video Game Nerd" and say "You know what's bullshit!?" - modern phones and mobile devices! Actually, some of them are pretty incredible, but the stupid, crappy aspect is the tech advancements that are actually counter-intuitive when you start thinking about it. As I mentioned earlier, I cracked the screen on my tablet. As most people will probably tell you, that's stunningly easy to do on most phones and tablets today. Part of the problem as I see it is this prevailing belief perpetrated by the companies making these things that phones and tablets are only 'high tech' if they have large screens with a minimal bordering frame, and are as thin and light

as possible. This makes the technology much easier to break, whether it is dropped, bumped, or left in one's pocket when they sit on it, forcing it into a potato chip shape. I hear tell of "gorilla glass" and other damage-resistant screens, but even the strongest glass can only be so durable when it's barely thicker than a sheet of paper. These thin, weightless hunks of technology border on unusable in their stock form, with their scant frame with nowhere to grip, and slick casing that slides along any surface or out of a hand easily. This is why protective cases are such a big symbiotic industry. It's a given that most mobile devices wouldn't survive more than a few weeks without one. I've proved as much with the second tablet I owned, which fell to the ground and cracked its screen in half before I had it for much more than a week. Its slick surface caused it to slide off a table and drop before I had a chance to get a protective case for it. Thankfully I was able to bluff my way into getting that one fixed under warranty, unlike my current tablet. My point is a protective case is pretty much a requirement to keep your device from turning into a ball of crumpled foil in a month. That case protects your device, but also doubles its weight and triples its thickness, negating that amazing thin, light tech which seemed to be the point in the first place.

To give a bit of contrast, my first tablet, a Samsung Galaxy note 10.1, their first tablet with a pen, one I seem to keep coming back to when a newer device needs fixing, even though it's a bit like going back to an Amiga 500 when you're used to using an A4000 with a 68060. While that tablet also has a case and cover, It has been dropped at least half a dozen times in its life, including a

couple times straight onto rough concrete, or against the edge of a table. Its edges and corners are scuffed and scarred, but its screen has never cracked once, even though it's endured punishment that would probably make a modern device look like a bag of crackers that was stepped on. As it's older technology, it's much chunkier and beefier, with glass that might actually be more than a millimeter thick, and has been a far better survivor for it, out-enduring its successors. I think tech companies and their consumers need to focus more on durability than looking like a high-tech silver sliver. It's probably in the manufacturer's interest to not make devices too strong, as it helps sell more cases and protective gear, and more new devices when old ones are broken, but screw them. It's wrong to punish consumers for being humans that don't have a perfect grip on their phone 100 percent of the time. You've already proved you can make tech that can take some hits, as I've experienced it personally. Stop making "newer, better" technology that's actually worse because a butterfly bounced off the screen and shattered it.

...Eric Schwartz  
From the AmiTech Gazette  
Dayton, Ohio, August 2020

## YouTube Links

10MARC - building around the Un-Amiga board:  
<https://youtu.be/097-uyUnqCl>

History of the Guru Meditation:  
<https://youtu.be/MJQ1vUWrq80>

...Courtesy of Eric Schwartz  
From the AmiTech Gazette  
Dayton, Ohio, August 2020

## Raspberry Pi News

CrowPi2 Raspberry Pi Laptop and Learning Center

<https://www.raspberrypi-spy.co.uk/2020/08/crowpi2-raspberry-pi-laptop-and-learning-platform/>

3D-printable cases for the Raspberry Pi High Quality Camera

<https://www.raspberrypi.org/blog/3d-printable-cases-for-the-raspberry-pi-high-quality-camera/>

## Broadband Customers Want Data Caps?

**Charter tries to convince FCC that broadband customers want data caps**

*(Editor's Note: This is a little off-topic, but the argument here is so ludicrous that I had to include it here. It's good for a laugh, but it would be funnier if not for the fact that the currently corrupt FCC will likely go along with it.)*

Charter Communications has claimed to the Federal Communications Commission that broadband users enjoy having Internet plans with data caps, in a filing arguing that Charter should be allowed to impose caps on its Spectrum Internet service starting next year.

Charter isn't currently allowed to impose data caps because of conditions the FCC placed on its 2016 purchase of Time Warner Cable. The data-cap condition is scheduled to expire on May 18, 2023, but Charter in June petitioned the FCC to let the condition expire two years early, in May 2021.

With consumer-advocacy groups and Internet users opposing the petition, Charter filed a response with

the FCC last week, saying that plans with data caps are "popular."

"Contrary to Stop The Cap's assertion [in an FCC filing] that consumers 'hate' data caps, the marketplace currently shows that broadband service plans incorporating data caps or other usage-based pricing mechanisms are often popular when the limits are sufficiently high to satisfy the vast majority of users," Charter told the FCC.

Charter's filing continued:

There is also evidence that some consumers—either those who do not consume a lot of data and/or those who are looking for a lower-cost plan—may want a service where prices are based on the amount of data used... These different plans are proliferating in the market because they offer consumers a cost-effective alternative to unlimited data plans that are more than adequate to meet their needs. The DC/UBP [data caps and usage-based pricing] Condition, however, prevents Charter from keeping pace with its competitors and offering consumers the kinds of plans they are looking for. While Charter sees value in providing its service without data caps or UBP and has no plans to change that practice, Charter reasonably seeks the same flexibility that all of its competitors and peers have to manage data usage. This way if circumstances change, it has flexibility to offer the service packages its customers want.

Charter neglected to mention that home-Internet providers generally don't charge customers less when they don't use much data. Instead, the price is usually the same regardless of whether one uses 10GB a month or 1.2TB. Cable customers who exceed a data cap have to pay extra fees, but aside from some limited exceptions, they don't get a discount off the base price when they stay under the cap.

Charter pointed to Comcast's 1.2TB monthly data cap and the fact that

most customers don't use that much data as evidence that "the market does not support unreasonable data limitations." But Comcast—like Charter—is the only high-speed cable or fiber provider for tens of millions of customers across the United States, so Comcast customers don't have much choice. Comcast imposes its cap in most of the states it operates in, but not in the Northeast US where it faces strong competition from Verizon's un-capped fiber-to-the-home FiOS service—evidence that "the market" discourages caps when ISPs face real competition.

Charter also claimed the merger condition "prevents Charter from developing innovative service plans that are more tailored to consumers' needs," but there is nothing preventing Charter from offering cheaper plans to customers now and differentiating plans by speed instead of data allotment. In fact, Charter already does that by charging different prices for different speeds and by offering a low-cost plan with 30Mbps speeds to low-income families.

### **Charter: Lack of competition is "beside the point"**

Charter's petition also asks the FCC to lift a condition that prevents the company from charging network-interconnection fees to large online video providers.

Charter claimed that it faces sufficient competition from wireline, mobile, and satellite providers. But Charter also argued that "Opponents' claims that the [broadband] market is not competitive are beside the point... because Charter, like other broadband providers, lacks

the incentive or ability to discriminate against OVDs [online video distributors]. OVDs are critical to the [broadband] business and far too large and powerful to thwart with data caps or interconnection fees."

Charter's petition said that in June this year, "residential data usage for Internet-only customers was 600 gigabytes per month, up nearly 20 percent from the fourth quarter of 2019 due to pandemic-related working and learning from home."

### **Roku: Data caps should be "a relic of the past"**

Charter's petition is opposed by consumer advocates, hundreds of customers who submitted filings to the FCC docket, and Roku.

"If it were to sanction data caps in the absence of competitive broadband Internet access services, the Commission would not only allow Charter to act on its incentives to act anti-competitively but also signal to other broadband providers who are unconstrained by competition that they too are free to adopt anti-competitive measures. Data caps should become a relic of the past," Roku told the FCC last week.

Charter also faces opposition from Incompas—an industry group that represents Netflix, Amazon, other online service providers, and a variety of companies in the telecom business.

Charter has gotten support for its petition from charities and politicians it donated to, as we detailed in a previous article. But Charter apparently wrote letters on behalf of charities, and one of the groups has

said it doesn't actually support Charter's petition, Bloomberg reported yesterday:

When asked by Bloomberg News about a letter filed July 20, the Niagara Falls Boys & Girls club, which got \$5,000 from Charter for a summer camp, backed away from its support for the measure Charter is seeking from the FCC.

The letter the club submitted was prepared by Charter and "upon closer review, the last paragraph of the letter states that we support" Charter's request, Rebecca Vincheski, chief executive officer of the club, said in an email.

The club has "a position of neutrality on this important community issue," Vincheski said.

The deadline for submitting responses to Charter's petition passed on August 6. FCC Chairman Ajit Pai voted against the merger conditions when they were imposed in 2016 under then-FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler and could ask the Republican-majority commission to vote on Charter's petition in the coming months.

...Jon Brodtkin,  
Ars Technica 8/11/2020  
<https://tinyurl.com/y6p5m2aa>

September Meeting — Canceled

248 SW Johnson Ave. Burleson, Texas 76028

MCCC 2507 Tamaron Cove Cedar Hill, Texas 75104

<http://www.amigamccc.org>

