

Notes For SLCC In-Person and Zoom Meeting 6-3-2025

Hosted by Kevin

In Attendance at the San Leandro Library, Kevin, Robbie, and Ron

In Attendance For The Zoom Meeting, Kevin, Robbie, Ron, Scott, Don, Rod, and Bob

Quick recap

The meeting covered discussions on various vintage computers, their features, and troubleshooting issues, including a Zenith ZFL-1, TRS-80 models, and early computer manuals. Participants also talked about recent rocket launches, the approval process for Starship launches, and the reliability of Falcon 9 rockets. The group examined a malfunctioning floppy disk drive, conducted a raffle, and addressed router connectivity problems, concluding with suggestions for managing device temperatures in hot environments.

Next steps

- [Kevin: Investigate and repair the power issue in the TRS-80 computer, that started smoking during the meeting](#)
- [Scott: Test router at a lower height in the shop to determine if heat is causing connectivity issues](#)
- [Scott: If router continues to fail at lower height, install a fan near the router for cooling](#)

Summary

Zenith ZFL-1 Computer Discussion

Don and Kevin discussed a Zenith ZFL-1 computer, examining its features and functionality. They noted that the screen brightness and contrast improved after being on for about 15 minutes, suggesting the capacitors were reforming. Kevin demonstrated the computer's pop-up drives and explained its specifications, including 640K of RAM and a 10-inch CGA-compatible display. They also discussed the computer's DOE sticker, though they were unsure of its exact meaning.

Rocket Testing and Computer Issues

Kevin discussed issues with a portable computer, noting that while the internal components worked well, the case was deteriorating and required tape to keep it together. The group also talked about a recent rocket launch, where the booster exploded during testing, though this was expected as part of the experimental process. Scott explained that the rocket's engines cost about a million dollars each, and Don pointed out that early rocket tests, including Polaris and Vanguard, had also experienced failures before becoming successful.

Starship Launch Approval Discussion

The group discussed the approval of 25 Starship launches per year, compared to the historical NASA approach of infrequent launches. They also talked about the reliability of Falcon 9 launches and the need for accident analysis

reports before obtaining a new launch license. The conversation then shifted to Don's experience with a TRS-80 computer and an intelligent tape drive, which could load programs at high speed.

1980s Computer Equipment Nostalgia

Don, Kevin, and Scott discussed various computer manuals, instruction tapes, and equipment from the 1980s, including a flight simulator, Micro Chess, and Model 4 systems. They noted the differences between the green screen monitors of Model 4 and the black-and-white monitors of earlier models. Don mentioned finding a price list for Exatron products from 1982, sparking curiosity about the company's history.

TRS-80 and Color Computer Specifications

The group discussed the specifications and interfaces of early computers, particularly the TRS-80 and Color Computer models. They examined details about memory configurations, including 16K and 32K interfaces, and debated the necessity of color interfaces for these systems. Kevin shared insights about the original TRS-80's basic operating system and common upgrades, while Don and Scott speculated about potential video memory enhancements for color displays. The conversation concluded with admiration for the detailed manual included with the game Zork, highlighting its comprehensive instructions and creative artwork.

Flight Simulator Program Discussion

The group discussed a flight simulator program running at 10 frames per second, with Don mentioning he had modified it in BASIC and possibly included machine language routines. Rod joined the meeting after a long absence and shared that he had been playing Atari and fixing an oscilloscope. The conversation included admiration for Robbie's TRS-80 Model 4 Flight Simulator, with Don recalling that the program allowed for flying off the grid and returning from the opposite side, which led to a lighthearted discussion about the shape of the Earth.

Floppy Drive Failure and Raffle

The group discussed a malfunctioning TRS-80, that emitted smoke when it failed, with Kevin explaining that the computer was still running before they pulled the power. Rod suggested it might be a paper capacitor issue, and the team decided to hold a raffle for the broken device. The incident caused some concern about triggering smoke alarms and setting off sprinklers, though the damage appeared limited to the capacitor.

Ticket Distribution and Case Examination

The group discussed the distribution of a winning ticket, with Rod selecting the winner, Kevin of the TRS-80 and also receiving Zenith portable. They examined the Zenith case, noting its rough texture and discussing its internal components, including the potential for damage if handled incorrectly. The conversation included a lighthearted exchange about using centimeters as a unit of measure, with Rod celebrating this as a sign of progress.

Netgear Router Troubleshooting Discussion

Scott is experiencing issues with a 10-year-old Netgear router that initially worked fine but then lost its internet connection. He moved it to the garage, where it has been functioning without problems for a few days. The group discussed potential causes, including overheating, and agreed that home routers are not typically smart enough to

adapt to signal strength. Scott mentioned he had not tried a different power supply, and the group suggested changing one variable at a time to troubleshoot the issue.

Overheating Device Solutions Discussed

Scott and Kevin discussed the issue of high temperatures affecting an electronic device in a room, with the A/C kicking on at 85 degrees and temperatures potentially rising over 90 degrees when it cuts out. Kevin suggested using a small USB fan mounted nearby or testing the device at a lower level to prevent overheating, and Scott considered using a timer for the fan or even creating a ventilation system between the studio and shop. The conversation briefly shifted to discussing different versions of DOS, before the meeting was cut short due to time constraints.