

# Disk drive repair turns into grisly tale of horror

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I'm sure if Benjamin Franklin were alive today, he's revise one of his most famous quotes to read: "In this world nothing is certain but death and taxes... and the 1541 disk drive developing problems."

Almost everyone I know with a 1541 at some time has had to part with this essential piece of their computer system because it went out of alignment or developed some similar malaise. And lots of these people have interesting stories about getting their drives repaired. One fellow I know suggested his adventures might make an interesting game — with a factor of one in several billion that it would have a happy ending!

At least two people in my users' group came close to developing ulcers because they had bought disk drives at a dealer which had been dropped from Commodore's "authorized" list. When their drives broke, they had to go through incredible hassle to get them repaired, including sending the drives to Toronto and writing threatening letters (which seemed to get the quickest results).

Probably the most bizarre story came from a member of our group. I'll let him tell it in his own words.

"Getting my computer equipment repaired puts me into a peculiar state of mind. Taking something into the shop is like leaving a relative in the hospital... in the cancer ward.

"My 1541 broke — out of alignment — on a holiday weekend, of course. I was desperate to get it repaired. One member of our group, a fellow I trust, whom we'll call Lenny and who was away on holiday, had told me that there was someone in a certain part of town who re-aligned drives and did good work. Acting on a tip, I drove to a store in that part of town.

"I asked a salesman in the store, 'Do you know anyone around here who repairs 1541s?' He replied, 'Sure, I do.' I asked him if Lenny had sent people to him to get their drives fixed, and he replied, 'Yes, on several occasions.'

"I gave him my drive, without getting a receipt (the epitome of stupidity!) When I phoned him several days later, he said he was working on the drive, but it needed one part to make it fully operational. He said he would try to pick up the part after work that evening.

"About this time I talked to my friend Lenny, who told me that he had *never* sent anyone to this fellow to get their 1541 repaired!

"Paranoia began to gnaw at my vitals. I phoned a couple of days later and not only had nothing been done on my drive, but this salesman had suddenly become 'sick.' No one would give me his unlisted phone number so I could get in touch with him.

"About this time I was seriously considering phoning another of our club members, a lawyer, for help. Finally, I got hold of the salesman's phone number. It seemed he had developed a terminal migraine headache and had been ordered to stay home by his doctor. But he said he was working on my drive.

"The next time I phoned him, he said the drive was in the store where he had left it (before he became ill), and he had to get a fellow employee named Bob to bring it to his house. A couple of days later, when I phoned again, he said that the drive was still in the store.

"Finally, I went to the store, and under the pretext of taking the drive over to the salesman's house, got it back. The fellow named Bob knew nothing about taking the drive anywhere.

"At this point I was relieved, because I at least had the drive back. But I discovered that no work had

been done on the drive — it was in the same condition as when I took it to the store two weeks previously.

"I managed to get the name from Lenny of the guy who I should have seen in the first place. When I arrived at his place, he whipped out his oscilloscope and began investigating my problems as I sat and watched. But he couldn't get any signal.

"This, we discovered, was because the motor which turns the disk wasn't working. And nothing could be done to make it function.

"My heart sank as I contemplated another \$40-\$50 for a new motor. I took everything home. Just for a lark, I connected the motor, which uses 12 volts DC, to my electric train transformer. It worked fine. So I took everything back to the guy's house.

"The next day I got a call from him. He said he'd aligned the drive perfectly, but he couldn't make it SAVE programs.

"Plunged into further depths of depression, I took the drive home again. Since the drive would READ disks, I booted up the C-64 wedge and the error message I got when trying to SAVE was WRITE PROTECT ON.

"Looking down inside the drive, I discovered that the little sensor for write protection had been dislodged from its socket. With a pair of tweezers, I inserted it back in and the drive worked perfectly."

Well, horror fans, is that story grisly enough? Do you believe it really happened? Don't laugh, because it happened... to me!

**Editor's note: Many 1541 repairs, such as alignments, can be done by users themselves with the right tools and a little know-how.**

**For readers without knowledge or not daring enough, it's best to deal only with a reputable repair centre such as the ones advertising in IN-PUT.**