

Welcome to the world of computers

By Andy King

Welcome to "One Byte At A Time". In this column it is my intention to help the readers of "Halton Hills This Week" gain a better understanding of today's offerings of micro-computers for home and small business use.

I will try to present you with information in plain english that should help you with your interest and dispel your fears of the emerging technology.

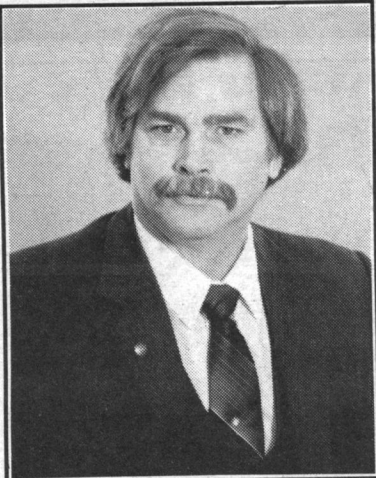
But first a bit of history. I am an associate Real Estate Broker with Canada Trust Realty Inc. and I operate LaserCraft Unlimited (Desk Top Publishing and Wholesale Computer Supplies).

A little more than five years ago I decided that I should check out personal computers to help me keep track of my real estate business. I visited several computer retailers telling each one that I had never put my fingers to a keyboard before and was finally sold a new mystery machine that came wrapped in several large boxes.

I could not wait to dig in and get it all hooked together. I had heard stories of people taking computers home and being overwhelmed when they looked in the box but I was determined to be the master of this new gadget.

Before long all the pieces were assembled and I was immersed in manuals because I was definitely going to make the machine do something for me any minute. At about 3 a.m. the next morning I was able to access the local real estate board computer over the phone

One Byte at a time



lines (I had not taken a break since the previous afternoon). I believe it was by day three that I figured out how to make the printer work.

During the following year I honed my skills learning word processing, spreadsheets and publishing software.

Early in the second year friends and associates started approaching me to create letters, page layouts and graphics for them with my computer. Later that year I acquired a high end laser printer and other enhancements and LaserCraft was born as a hobby business.

Today I produce a wide variety of typesetting, page layouts and graphics for fun and profit as well as dabbling in a little programming from time to time.

I am frequently called upon to consult with others who are shop-

ping for a computer or who are having difficulties with the computer they have.

One thing I have learned is that no matter what level of computer experience you have there is an "easy to master" system waiting for you out there. If you are apprehensive about computers bear in mind that in most cases where you hear of someone's struggle with a micro computer it is only because they have purchased "unfriendly" software that is beyond their current level of understanding.

Micro (desk top) computers have evolved from systems that only the very technically inclined could utilize a few years ago to a tool that can advance the productivity of almost everyone today. Without software your personal computer is no more intelligent than the blender in your kitchen.

Before you say "I'll never go near a computer" you may not realize how much your life is already affected by them. When you do your banking either you or the teller are using computers, when you watch the news or any other show on TV you are witnessing the results, when you read the newspaper, ditto. Almost everything you see or touch these days has been produced, catalogued, marketed or is operated with the help of computers. Chances are, you are driving a car whose functions are controlled by computer modules. Even if you don't own or operate a personal

micro computer you are probably already an experienced computer user.

In future articles I will attempt to shatter some of the barriers that everyday people encounter with the micro computer. I will try to answer all questions because I know how frustrating it can be when you are stuck on a problem. I welcome suggestions from the readers about future subjects you would like me to cover. Please feel free to call me at 873-1056.

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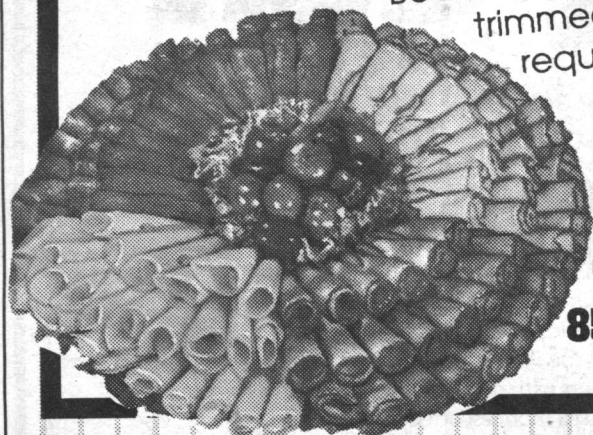
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