

Pointers on buying your first computer

By Andy King

When you think you are ready for your first personal computer there are a couple of things you should consider before you start looking.

First on everyone's list is probably "How much will it cost?"

For as little as a couple of hundred dollars you can pick up a computer being discarded by a user who has "powered up", or a relatively simple new system that would probably utilize your television as its monitor. Then, you can be "up and running".

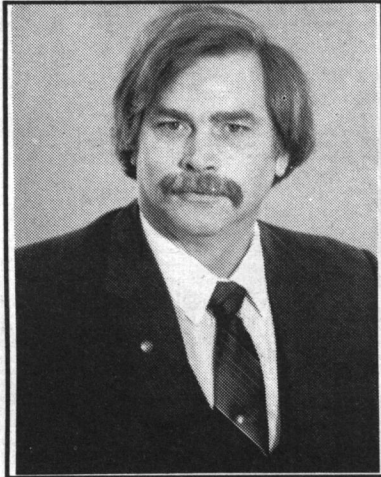
Next, you will need some software that should be suited to your needs. Don't be led into thinking the best word processing for you is the same package your lawyer or accountant is using when all you want to do is write letters. While professionals and some individuals use very powerful and expensive software packages, even they rarely utilize all the features available in such packages. (Besides, you probably don't want to have to take a college course just to learn how to type a letter).

You may have seen a recent television commercial that depicts a pair of office workers who have obviously spent several days of their unhappy employer's time setting up a new computer system. The advertiser then makes a statement inferring that their system is much easier to handle.

There are some points in this representation that deserve a closer look. The confusion the workers are experiencing setting up the new system may be realistic, but the system the workers are trying to set up is probably not generally suited for a beginner's use.

Some computer dealers will take the time to fully set your system up before you take it away. The advertiser's system is usually easier to use and more expensive. Whether or not the system being advertised is the most "user friendly" is debat-

One Byte at a time



able. Many computers will start themselves ("boot up") with the "flick of a switch" but there is considerable reading and experimenting required to operate most systems productively.

If you are a beginner, choose beginner software. You can move up to more advanced packages after you are comfortable with your system and you will always have the simple package to fall back on while you are wrestling with the high powered software. I know of small businesses that have operated for years on simple-to-use beginner type software purchased for about \$50. While the packages are not "all powerful", these businesses don't even need all of the features provided. Beginner software packages usually have simple manuals and allow you to get to work right away.

Many users will want to print what they create. In this hardware category there are options to fit almost any budget. NOTE: this is where you get what you are willing to pay for with respect to print quality, operational noise, speed, and cost of supplies.

You will need to do some forward planning. Try to determine what you think you will want your computer to do for you now and later. This will determine how much present and future power your computer must be capable of providing.

Dream a little. Today the personal computer can act as your personal diary or it can take you into your own business in professional sign making, art, publishing, photo retouching and processing, accounting, or even broadcast video.

If you happened to see the recent broadcast of Babylon 5 on television (the plot was the usual futuristic space crisis but the effects were very interesting) you may have thought that the space objects and scenes were photographs of models and backgrounds. Not so. All of the effects i.e., creatures turning into other shapes, various spacecrafts, etc. were created by computer. Some of the images were created right here in Georgetown by Trevor Morecroft at his Visual Vision video production studio.

If there is a subject you would like me to cover or a question you would like answered, please feel free to call me at 873-1056.

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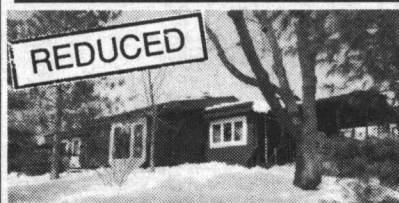
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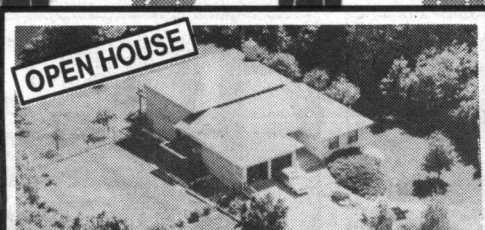
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