

Will computers be common as calculators?

By CRAIG PIECHURA

Has the science fiction of yesterday become the science fact of today? Well, nobody's walking around on air in inflatable shoes yet. And nobody commutes to and from work in a real rocket.

But home computers are a reality in 1978. There's even a computer store in the Applegate shopping center at Northwestern and Inkster Roads in Southfield. The store, which opened March 14, is attracting serious and curious customers with a healthy interest and even healthier bank accounts.

Owners Bill and Judy Fischette of West Bloomfield were given the second franchise of a California-based firm called ComputerLand. The firm's burgeoning growth is reflected in the fact that there are already 46 stores in the United States and another in Australia, and the company won't celebrate its second anniversary until Sept. 23. By the end of the year, the firm predicts 76 stores will be in operation.

The Southfield store offers a wide array of computers, ranging from a do-it-yourself home computer kit that looks like a supersonic cigar box and retails for \$270, all the way up to a

\$14,000 office management system that keeps track of inventory, accounts and payroll and prints invoices, labels and checks.

But one of the hottest sellers in the store is a home computer system called The Apple, manufactured by the Apple Co. of Cupertino, Calif. The computer terminal looks a lot like an electric typewriter and the whole thing plugs into a regular television set, a factor that makes the system "less threatening" to homeowners, according to Fischette.

ON FRIDAY, a couple of kids who live near the store were using the home computer to play blackjack and another computer game called Star Wars. One kid even straightened out Fischette, telling him how to type in a certain program when he encountered difficulty bringing it onto the screen.

Nobody in the store bothered the youngsters by telling them to move on, the place isn't an arcade. There's a reason for that unanimity.

"It's surprising how many kids come in and explore the machines and bring back their father," said Fischette. "These kids are comfortable around computers. They sometimes end up convincing their father that he needs to buy a computer for his business because it can do this or that."

But all is not games on the home computer system. It's quite a cut above the video ping-pong people are accustomed to viewing.

For example, by calling up a certain program and attaching the computer to a phone hook-up with New York, Fischette monitored 160 stocks in one minute. The quotation is as current as the Dow Jones index.

One customer, said Fischette, is considering buying the computer after finding out that the 88 stocks he was keeping track of daily in 2½ hours' time takes the home computer less than a minute to find and print.

A BIZARRE illustration of the computer's graphic function was revealed in a video graph that outlined President Carter's bio-rhythm cycle. Not surprisingly, Carter's emotional curve has been on its way down lately.

But buyers are not limited to charting Carter's psychic barometer or playing cards with the computer. There are countless uses because programs can be created and stored on either audio cassettes or the more sophisticated mylar computer discs.

Depending on the options, the home computer costs \$1,280 to \$3,300.

A rich man's amusement? Don't let sales manager Ray Gest hear you



There's a complicated computer program printed on that piece of Mylar that William Fischette holds in his hand. The terminal at which he's sitting is sold

mostly to businesses but a few serious computer buffs are installing sophisticated terminals in their homes. (Staff photo by Gary Friedman)

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—William Fischette, computer store owner

saying that.

"You're talking about the same price range many people pay for stereo systems," Gest said. "That's why we're here. Look at how many people own between \$1,000 and \$3,000 worth of stereo equipment? How many people own \$500 color TVs?"

Computers are no longer large, remote machines that are only used by

business, industry and universities, said Gest. They're in schools, small businesses and "Why not the home?"

Nonetheless, Mrs. Fischette noted that they decided to locate the store in the affluent suburbs, at the border of Farmington Hills and Southfield, and would not, say, attempt to open up a franchise in Detroit.

WHY SHOULD people plunk down \$1,000 to buy one of the first home computer outlets when the price of pocket calculators has fallen so drastically in the past five years?

Fischette says the technology that made the calculators reasonably priced has also made computers accessible to the public.

"Computer chips were invented in 70 and advanced through 1974," explained Gest. In 74 we got better microprocessors.

The next big breakthrough, Gest predicts, will be "bubble memory," a new technique for storing more information magnificently. Bell Laboratories invented the process and it is presently being used to guide F-16 fighter jets.

But that process is years away from general application, Gest says, and too many people are eager to explore the possibilities of home computers to wait.



This home computer system costs from \$1,280 to \$3,000 and can be programmed to blast space ships off the screen or to monitor hundreds of current stocks on the Dow Jones index. It just depends on what game you wish to play. (Staff photo)

THE INSIDE * ANGLE

WELCOME ABOARD. Farmington Hills Police Chief John Nichols recently welcomed six new officers to the force last week. They were DARYL SLOWINSKI, GARY HALWA, DONALD FRADETTE, GARY BRANDEMIHL, ROBERT BURKHART and SANDRA BENCSIK. Ms. Bencsik is the second female officer on the force.

ART AUCTION. The Novi Jaycee Auxiliary is sponsoring an art auction on Sept. 15, with a champagne preview kicking off the event at 7:30 p.m. The auction will commence at 8:30 p.m. The auction will be at the Novi Public Library, 45245 Ten Mile. Donation is \$1 per person. Selections will include original oils, lithographs and woodcuts, as well as metal sculptures. Individual pieces will range from \$5 to \$500. The show is coordinated by Gallery Art Center of Berkeley.

TRAINING is planned for Sept. 12 for persons who wish to learn how to take blood pressure readings. The course, being offered by the Red Cross, will be from 9 a.m.-noon at the Oak Park office, 26900 Greenfield. Fee for the class is \$2.50. The charge includes a textbook which can be purchased at the class. Pre-registration is required and can be made by calling 968-2255.

SPRUCE UP YOUR HOUSE with some antiques. The Botsford Inn Antique Show, on Sept. 17, from noon to 4 p.m. will give you a chance to browse and purchase some of the wares being displayed. Admission is free of charge. Among the items to be featured will be walnut bedroom furniture, buggy seats and an interesting mixture of brass accessories that include ink wells and candlesticks. A good supply of pottery and old baskets will be available. Many drawers cabinets from child size to pieces will be available, as well. One booth will feature old frames and prints. These include walnut, oak and gold leaf. Other items will be primitive pieces from Pennsylvania, boxes, iron eagles and spice chests.

A SMALL BUSINESS workshop, jointly sponsored by Madonna College in Livonia, the Small Business Administration and the Service Corps of Retired Executives, will be Sept. 23 and Oct. 7, from 8:45 a.m. to 5 p.m. The sessions will advise new businessmen or those contemplating starting a business on risks of small business ownership, laws and regulations, marketing and financial considerations. Registration may be completed in the administration building at the Student Service

Center, 36600 Schoolcraft throughout the week between 8:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. The course may be taken for two credits at \$94 or non-credit at \$75. Bob Ingram, coordinator of the workshop, has an MBA and over 20 years of experience in financial and management in large and small industries and service organizations. Discussions concerning insurance will cover commercial and health insurance, employee benefits and keeping proper records. All aspects of starting a business plan will cover objectives, marketing decisions, financial planning, legal aspects and administrative tasks.

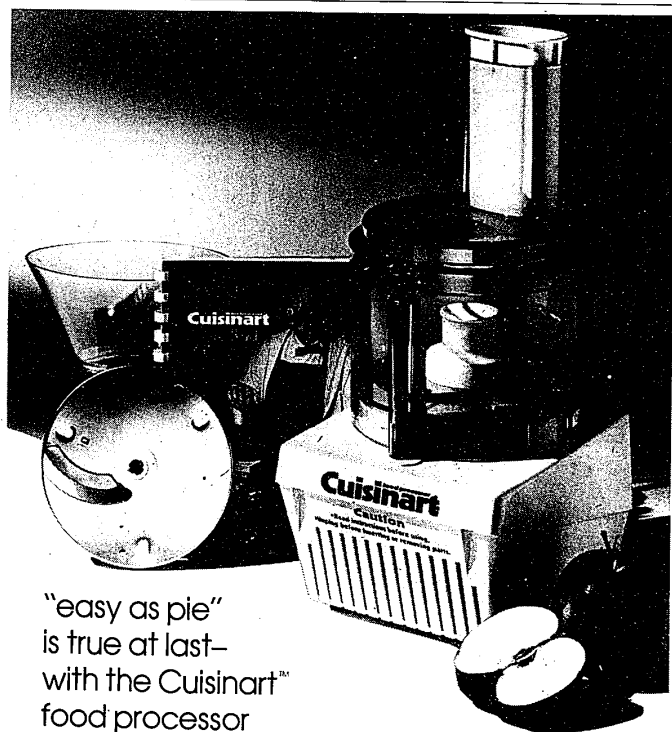
KARATE for men and women will be taught at Madonna, focusing on the Moo Duk Kwan style during the September term. A Monday evening class, 7-9 p.m., begins Sept. 11 and an afternoon class on Wednesdays, beginning Sept. 13, noon to 1:30 p.m. The course is offered for one credit at \$42 or non-credit at \$40. Registrations are being accepted on a first come basis in the administration building, at the student service center, 36600 Schoolcraft.

SOUR REVENGE. To assuage his anger, an employee of a French wine producer recently poured almost \$600,000 worth of fine Burgundy into the sewers of the village, resulting in the poisoning death of thousands of fish. Wine flowed from the sewers of Nuits Saint George into the Meuzin River in eastern France, polluting it so heavily dead fish were found 12 miles away.

THE FINLANDIA MALE Male Chorus of Detroit, is planning an evening of country-western style entertainment on Sept. 26 at the Finnish Cultural Center, 33200 Eight Mile, Farmington Hills. The variety show will begin at 8 p.m. and will consist of songs in both Finnish and English by the Finlandia Male Chorus and individual folk and country western singers, as well as square dancing. Refreshments by the Finlandia Male Chorus Ladies Auxiliary will be available after the performance. Donation is \$2.50 per person or \$4.50 per couple. Tickets are available at the door or from any member of the Finlandia Male Chorus. Male singers interested in joining the Finlandia Male Chorus may call Lincoln Hirvela for complimentary tickets or attend a rehearsal at 7:30 p.m. every Tuesday evening at the center.

DEADLINE

Material submitted for the Inside Angle, 22170 Nine Mile, Southfield, 48034, should include the name and phone number of the sender and should be typewritten if possible. Items should be received at least one week before publication.



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