

# Computers inch their way to the top of status heap

Thursday, January 11, 1979

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Some things are just plain awesome, like out-of-the-park home runs or perfect gemstones.

Or computers.

But scratch that last entry if you are talking to Vic Visocchi and his friends at the Computer Center.

"Back in the '40's, not everybody had a refrigerator. In the '50's it was televisions and hi-fi. In the '60's it was high-powered stereo. Now, in this decade, it's computers," says Visocchi.

That's easy for Visocchi to say. The computer engineer has been fiddling with those mysterious devices for eight years now, the last two as an independent programmer. Words like interface and modes, buses and chips are his daily language.

But how does he plan to sell computers to people who won't change their own spark plugs.

"They're going to be kind of forced into it. You go to a bank now and somebody plugs your book into a computer and it's balanced. They used to do it by hand. Now, in the back of your mind you start accepting computers," said Visocchi.

"By 1985, computers will be in people's houses like color televisions were 10 years ago," said Visocchi. Working at the Computer Center on Ford Road in Garden City are Visocchi's Italian-born father, Bruno, and assistant Brad Cervenk.

On a recent afternoon, a visitor found Cervenk programming an \$8,000 micro-processor with the new store's lease agreement.

Cervenk is a high school senior at Redford St. Mary.

"I look, if a high school student can do this, do you really think anybody else

will have that big a problem?" asked Visocchi.

Cervenk, who took his first computer class as a high-school freshman, has already had nearly four years experience with computers. He knows two computer languages and is learning a third, so maybe calling him a high-school student is telling the truth, but not all of it.

Visocchi figures his big draw for the Computer Center comes from two sources.

"Right now, if you own a computer and something goes wrong with it, you've got to send it to the manufacturer to have it fixed. Most of them are in California. Now, if you owned a television and everytime a tube blew out you

had to send it to RCA in New York or somewhere, you might not think so much about televisions.

"We're going to do our own servicing right here," said Visocchi, whose latest job is programming a Ford Motor Co. computer to handle the company's money investments.

Computers at the store now range from that \$8,000 model, which Visocchi says is primarily a small-business computer, to a \$300 home model that will balance a checkbook for you or let you fill Bob Scheinbecker's role at the Rose Bowl with a football game. The computer's memory can store football plays you design yourself.

Brave new world stories about com-

puters making your coffee in the morning and opening up the garage door before they start the car are just that—stories, says Visocchi.

"You've got to wire the whole house for that." While they haven't arrived yet, Visocchi said he also plans to sell more staid computer games for under \$100.

Visocchi's second ace in the hole, he says, will be classes at the store in how to prevent your computer from throwing interceptions or misbalancing the family books.

"A of people have no idea. They think it's magic, but it's not. We'll have seminars, probably for a week or two,

and it should let you get the basics down pretty well," he said.

The basics aren't always enough, however, and Visocchi has put together a thick binder of instructions for using that \$8,000 model. The first lesson in the binder is how to unpack the machine.

"Just about anything you'll have a problem with is in that book, and this way we figure we'll keep from getting bothered by routine stuff."

There are three components to the \$8,000 model, and in the store's first three days of operation, all or parts of the model were sold to two people. They're probably still trying to unpack it.

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