

He invents new games

By MARY GNIEWEK

It all started innocently enough — a visit from a grandfather who lives in Chicago, a trip to a shopping center on Northwestern at Inlander, and a casual but persistent interest in a new store called Computerland.

From that set of circumstances, 11-year-old Scott Berk of Farmington Hills has become a computer programmer. He works at the Southfield store two days a week after school and Saturdays.

Scott, a sixth grader at Woodcreek Elementary School, dragged his grandfather into Computerland last June, according to his mother, Donna Berk.

In the months that followed, Scott befriended the staff, learned to operate a floor model home computer system, and programmed at least a dozen TV screen games — including a more in-depth version of Mattel's popular Simon game. He also duplicates and tests programs that are sold to new owners of Apple II, a home computer by Sony that retails for \$1,195.

The relationship between Scott and Computerland is mutually beneficial, says salesman Herschel Coley. Scott can settle his scientific curiosity and polish his programming skills while the store projects a positive image to potential customers.

"Computers in the home is a Buck Rogers-type concept for most people," Coley said. "Adults think computers are complex to use. When they see an 11-year-old programming one, their fears begin to subside."

"TO SCOTT'S generation, born about

the time we sent a man to the moon, computers are a readily acceptable phenomenon. His generation can deal with them, like kids in the '50s accepted television and vacuum cleaners."

Scott, the eldest of four children of Donna and Barry Berk, is a self-taught programmer.

"For two months, I just read the manuals," he said. "Then I started writing programs at home and came in to try them out."

Through library books, Scott taught himself binary, the basic internal language of computers. It's math based on the numbers 1 and 0 only. Coley says such knowledge at the elementary school level is unusual.

"He's in the gifted program, but he doesn't work with computers at

school," Mrs. Berk said. "Science and math have always been his favorite subjects. He's done electronics, astronomy and chemistry sets since he was 6."

A friendly rivalry is detected between mother and child.

"I'd love to have a computer at home," Scott said from behind the ter-

minial of Apple II.

"He wishes for one every time he blows out the candles on his birthday cake," his mother laughs.

For the time being, Mrs. Berk says her son has to settle for alternatives.

The family has a collection of computer games like Simon, Mervyn and Speak and Spell.

"IT TOOK me about three weeks to program Simon," Scott said of his version.

It's like Simon says. Four basic color flash in varied sequence on a TV screen and the player must repeat the pattern (via typewriter key) in five seconds.



Scott Berk enjoys a moment with a computer terminal and display screen. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Michigan Taxpayer Guide available

The Michigan Taxpayer's Guide, with helpful hints on filling out this year's tax forms, is available through the office of State Rep. Wilbur Brotherton.

The booklet contains information on property taxes, the property tax credit, the Michigan income tax, the single business tax and several other tax-related subjects.

Because tax laws are changed so often, it is increasingly difficult for the average citizen to complete his or her own forms, Brotherton said. This publication is one of the few in which citizens can find information on the many Michigan tax laws in easy-to-understand language.

The booklet outlines new benefits for senior citizen taxpayers, and contains information on the Property Tax Assistance Program and the Energy Assistance Program. There also are programs and tax breaks for senior citizens which they may not be aware of.

Homestead property tax credits and home heating assistance credits may be applied for on the same form, this year in order to cut down on paperwork. In addition, any senior citizen who would like assistance in filling out their homestead property tax forms should fill out the request blank in the booklet and mail it to Brotherton in care of the State Capitol, Lansing 48909, or call (517) 373-1793.

Brotherton

urges caution

State Rep. Wilbur Brotherton (R-Farmington) said today that budget cuts issued by Governor William Milliken should be kept at a minimum in education and revenue sharing.

State Budget Director Gerald Miller said recently that the governor must issue an executive order slashing \$40 million in state spending from the 1978-79 budget.

"I would be very reluctant to see cuts in school aid or revenue sharing," Brotherton said. "I hope we can keep the cut to a minimum by paring down the supplemental appropriations bill."

Negotiations between the governor's office and legislative leaders are currently taking place to determine what supplemental spending is necessary and where cuts might be made.

Educators examine future enrollment

(Continued from page 1A)

to talk with school professionals. A reading specialist, speech therapist, nurse and other professionals will be on hand for the testing.

"This doesn't eliminate the kindergarten round-up, but it will eliminate a lot of paperwork."

"Hopefully, next year we will have a more comprehensive preschool program. Our current offerings are limited to special education handicapped youngsters and Head Start (a federally subsidized education program for the economically disadvantaged.)"

"Our intention is not to compete with day care centers or nursery schools. We won't be offering service from 9 to 5 each day. But we hope to offer some enrichment programs at minimal charge."

The individual assessments will take place March 19 at Alameda and Beechview; March 20 at Eagle and Planders; March 21 at Forest and Gill; March 22 at Highmeadow and Kenbrook; March 23 at Larkshire and Longacre; March 24 at Middlebelt and Shawwassee; March 27 at Win. Grace and Woodcreek; March 29 and 30 at Wooddale. Extra makeup days will be added to accommodate all preschoolers.

"We don't want to leave anyone out," Lewis said. "It's important to know every child that will be in kindergarten in September. An accurate assessment is necessary."

All appointments must be made through Fairview Center, 2850 Oak Crest, Farmington Hills. There is no charge. Call 626-8335 for an appointment.

Judge Hand celebrates

(Continued from page 1A)

One Irishman who won't be at Sunday's parade is Detroit City Councilman Jack Kelley, who usually has the honor of leading the entourage through downtown Detroit.

"He's a colorful character, but not quite as colorful since he's stopped drinking," Hand joked. "It will be the first parade he's missed in 19 years. I'll be wearing Jack's big green hat."

HAND'S IRISH roots can be traced to County Meath, where his father, John, was a member of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and County Monaghan, where his mother Margaret McCarrill was raised in a family of 17 children.

"My father left Ireland with a price on his head. That's why I was born in Canada," Hand said.

The judge visited Ireland for the first time seven years ago. He plans to return this summer.

"It's a beautiful, hospitable country. They like all Americans, especially Irish Americans," he said.

Among many relatives living in the mother country is Patrick McCarrill, who is speaker of Dail Eireann, a position comparable to Speaker of the House.

Sunday's parade starts at 2 p.m. at the Fisher Freeway and Woodward. It kicks off a week of celebration that culminates on Saturday, March 17, the actual St. Patrick's Day.

On that day, Hand will attend noon Mass at Holy Trinity Church and an evening dance with his wife, Eileen, at the Irish American Club, where he's been a member for 40 years.

The Hands have six children. Their father proudly asserts that daughters Patricia, Sheila, Mary Kathleen and Eileen are proficient Irish dancers.

Vacation tip

In most cases, a homeowner's policy will cover luggage and personal property on a trip up to at least \$1,000. Before leaving, call your agent and review special coverage.

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MONDAY - FRIDAY 10 AM - 6 PM SATURDAY 10 AM - 7 PM SUNDAY NOON - 3 PM