

# How do you decide where to buy a computer?

First, a confession. I owe some of you some answers to mail, and even, the odd returned phone call. I've spent the last few months in airplanes somewhere between here and Albuquerque, New Mexico.

That makes it a little hard to stay in touch. So, I thought I'd use this and the next column to answer the two most prevalent questions: "How do I select the right computer supplier?" and "How do I select the right computer?" We'll start with the supplier question, since you need the supplier before you can buy the computer.

The Oakland County area has a wealth of computer stores, consultants, integrators and other purveyors of computers and systems. For folks looking at personal computers for home or business there are lots of decisions. Add to the predictable collection of vendors who specialize in things computerish the appliance stores and department stores who have decided to add PCs to their inventories of washers, dryers and TVs, and you have a truly prodigious collection of places to buy your new computer.

WELL, IT'S REALLY not as tough a decision as it might seem. Everything starts with the purpose behind buying your new computer. For starters, is it business or home use you have in mind? If business, you'll get the best support from a consultant

who can sell you the system, install it, set it up and support it for you. This is the highest price way to go because these outfits are, usually, small and don't have big time buying power. However, they usually provide the most personalized service. For small businesses that's well worth the price.

For larger businesses and those of you who are pretty sharp with a PC, the best place to go is the bigger computer store such as Businessland or Computerland. There are, of course, many others including our own local Incomp. These stores



the computer insider  
**Peter Stephenson**

tend to be lighter on support (no matter what they claim) and heavy on mainline products at very good prices. Since you only need limited support, the price and product quality is very inviting. For home use, you can't go wrong

with the appliance and department stores. These stores don't usually carry the mainline products, but for home use (lighter duty than day-in, day-out business use) the products they sell are quite acceptable. These suppliers also have reasonably good

service departments. And, there seems to be a constant price war going on from which you, the consumer, will benefit.

THERE'S ONE MORE reason to buy the home computer from one of these stores. They usually put together a 'kit' which includes computer, display, printer and some software. Sometimes they'll even throw in a modem and a copy of Prodigy. Also, you can, often, wheel and deal a bit to get the biggest collection of goodies for the lowest price. Buying a PC is a bit like buying a

car. You need to shop around, kick a few tires, and get the deal that fits your requirements. Consider price, product and support, and you won't go wrong. And that's the inside story.

Peter Stephenson is a computer consultant, lecturer, nationally published columnist and author who lives in Rochester Hills. He can be reached via electronic mail on Prodigy (GMW659A), MCI Mail (Pstephenson) and on the Computer Insider BBS (375-1771) as well as by letter to The Observer & Escort.

## Floats bubble for charity

Target Stores and A&W will kick off a new "Root Beer Float" fundraising promotion to benefit the Easter Seal Society in the Metro-Detroit area.

The "Float Promotion," featuring A&W root beer and cream soda, will be a special feature in the snack bars at all Target Stores from Sunday, July 21 through Saturday, July 27.

Although both Target Stores and A&W are corporate sponsors of the Easter Seal Society and are committed to the organization's mission of helping persons with disabilities achieve maximum independence, this is the first time they have worked together on a project. Every dollar spent on the Target Stores and A&W "Root Beer Float Promotion" will go toward local Easter Seal Society programs and services.

Since 1919, Easter Seals has been dedicated to providing quality rehabilitation services to people with disabilities and their families. Approximately 90 percent of all money raised is retained locally to serve people with disabilities.

## OU workshop on perfectionism

An Oakland University Continuum Center workshop "Excellence Without Perfectionism" will explore perfectionism 1-4 p.m. Wednesday, July 31 on the Rochester campus.

Continuum Center training specialist Roberta "Jill" Dailey will examine the pattern of setting a standard for excellence, achieving it, and, after a few successes, being drawn into an expectation of flawlessness in every task taken on. Participants will look at how, carried to extremes, perfectionism can run their lives and ruin their relationships. The program will focus on striving for excellence without using self-defeating behavior.

The fee is \$39. MasterCard/Visa accepted. Registrations will be taken through July 29. Call 370-3033.

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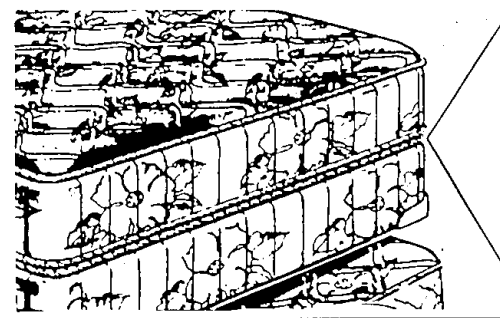
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