Personal Computers â€“ 25 Years and Counting â€“ Part IX

Description

Part VIII is here.

In the fall of 1986, I also purchased an Apple][gs. The short story of the acquisition is the Surface Forces, Atlantic Officerâ€™s Wives Club had a scholarship and annually held an auction to raise money. We were *ahem* encouraged to find worthwhile items to donate for this endeavor. I did track down a few items that did make some money for the scholarship in the silent auction part of the evening and later, a][gs went up for the main auction. I, being the hobbyist I was, lusted after the 128K of the newer version of the workhorse, the new mouse â€œpointing deviceâ€• and itâ€™s early graphical user interface (GUI). They brought it out and wanted to start the bidding at $900. No one raised their hand or spoke. It was a great item, but no one seemed rich enough. Finally, after much cajoling from the CNSL Chief or Staffâ€™s wive, we began the bidding. I think someone first said $600. Anyhow, the â€œbattle enusedâ€• and I won at $825. My evil plan was to put it in the paper and make a few dollars, as I couldnâ€™t really afford it at the time. As I walked out to the car with my prize, one couple said they wanted it and asked if Iâ€™d take $850. I turned them down politely, and the next day put my ad in the paper.

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One call came that week, and, after the initial fact finding by the caller, and I guess the attempt to see how little Iâ€™d take, I never got another call. I sold it to my sister for what I paid for it the following week. I will admit to having pulled it all out of the boxes and booting it up for a few hours, before I reboxed it for shipment.

Somewhere in this time period, I got a look at a program by Owl Software named â€œGuide.â€• I canâ€™t find any links to it, but I saw it running on the Apple][series. It may have been at AppleFest in 1983 (held in Boston). Anyhow, I was intrigued for you could mark a section of text and when a user clicked on it, another document would load and be displayed. You could use it for acronyms, of more detailed info on a topic, and there seemed to be no limits to the â€œdepthâ€• of the linking. I thought you could generate a document coveinr all aspects of a topic, to the very minutest level of detail, yet the reader wold only have to dig in as far as necessary to make sure they followed/understood the writing. Of course, now we know this as HTML, but, if youâ€™ve followed the series, this is my second encouter with software that used the methodolgy of the Wolrd Wide Web, years after I had seen it.

Also in this time frame, probably around early 1986, I convinced the spouse we should upgrade to a Mac, now that used ones were on the market. I do recall seeing the 1984 SuperBowl commercial for the Mac, and then kept my eye on the development, but it was too expensive. I finally found one two years later, when someone else was upgrading their system, and I bought their Mac 512K, complete with the single external 400K 3.5â€³ floppy.

Now, about 4.5 years into owning computers, I moved from 1Mhz (8 bit words)/48K/134K (storage) to 8Mhz (16 bit words) /512K/400K (storage) Moden spped had moved from 300 bps to 1200 bps over the same time frame.

From here I began learning about â€œobject oriented programmingâ€• (OOP) from a program that was part of the Mac purchase (if new) or $30 if purchased separately with HyperCard (I bought it when it came out in 1987). It allowed you to manage data and pictures and place buttons all over the background, and you could â€œprogramâ€• on a set of cards, much like having a rolodex, and each card was a new surface to work on. Not only did you do much of the work graphically, you cold then attach code to any of the â€œobjectsâ€• on the screen. I, once more, figured out some things I wanted to do and then figured out how to make HyperCard do it for me. I hacked up someone elseâ€™s public domain address book, and I transmogrified it so I could also keep track of who I send Christmas cards to each year, and also for the current year, where I made it print out all my mailing labels for the year I was working on them.

I also found out it was much more fun to create a â€œthis is everythingâ€• letter for Chritmas, then Iâ€™d cut and paste each one going out, depending on how much contact Iâ€™d had with the friendd/relative that year. Ah, the magic of word processingâ€¦

Next â€œexpose:â€• Retreading other serial posts, the HyperCard in Navigation and 4th Dimension helps lay out a long range project.

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Date Created
October 16, 2006
Author
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