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

Description

Moving right along from Part IX, I advance to the later part of 1986, where I not only played with computers, but also managaed to stand watches in the Med from Jan to May, while we bombed Libya from north of the â€œLine of Death.â€• Details of that story are in the series â€œA Journey Into Historyâ€• (Part I is here). One of the other details not previously discussed in either series, is I began â€œoffline bloggingâ€• back in those days, as I began to write â€œLife Between the Catapults or What I did on My Indian Ocean Cruise.â€• Unfortunately, I have lost the 5 1/4â€³ floppies that contained my musings, but, I do recall it was a daily writing effort for while. At some point, some of those adventures will become part of the the weekly (on Wednesdays) Ropeyarn Sunday â€œSea Storiesâ€• and Open Trackback postings, like the story of USS FAKEFISH.

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We returned from that cruise and were tasked with some tactical R&D effort for the Tomahawk Anti-Ship Missile (TASM). Rather than retype it all here, click over to this post and see how I used the Mac 512K to take the edge off the rather extensive data reduction and report writing. It was Apple that saved the world (notice how Apple computers are prominent in so many movies these days, many of them about hi-tech stuff and svaing the world?)



Apple Mac SE

From that job, I headed to school in Newport. While enroute, I found out my sisterâ€™s company that sold lab equipment had added the Mac SE to their line, and that she would purchase one for me. I got settled in in Newport and the SE arrived. When I unboxed it and plugged it in, the supplied keyboard didnâ€™t work. That turned out to not be a problem, as using the mouse and a Apple Menu item named â€œKey Caps,â€• I was able to click on a graphical keyboard, then select the typed text and copy and paste it. I set up the entire system, including several layers of folders using the mouse alone. A few days later, a new keyboard arrived and thigs were great.

The Mac SE was my first system with the â€œADBâ€• (Apple Desktop Bus). This was a serial interface that allowed you to â€œdaisy chainâ€• items, such as the mouse and keyboard and other input devices, in line. Sounds familiar? That was 1987. Now we see it in the form os the â€œUSBâ€• interface, but, once more, Apple enigineers were out ahead of the pack. I out the SE to good use for the later part of 1987, and into early 1988. It was very handy when doing those class papers, and I could

graphically maneuver the page margins and font size to make my paper fit the magical 8 page standard. It was great if you were short on what to say, and also if you had too much to say.

We formed an Mac club and also succeeded in converting most of the local Apple][users group to Mac users, because we could. I tried my hand at editing a newsletter for club. I used Aldus PageMaker and one of the other page layout programs, and I learned about kerning and leading and linking columns across pages. I learned a lot more, too.

Once more, I pulled Excel out and developed two logistical problems we had to solve. It took 20 hours over the weekend, but Iâ€™m sure it would have taken much, much longer by hand. I brought it into class, and passed out the handouts. The Air Force Col, who was one of our moderators flipped through the spreadsheet and said: â€œIâ€™m not going to ask any questions because youâ€™ll probably point at one of these numbers and make me feel stupid.â€• Well, it was a good briefing and I have to admit I gained a lot of respect for the â€œloggiesâ€• as I spend the time at home trying to figure out how to get a few divisions and fighter wings, along with all their equipment loads, into Kuwait very quickly (this was in late 1987).

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Next time: Mac IIs, 256 colors, 8 bit sound editing and color business cards.

Category

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Date Created
October 17, 2006
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