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

Description

â€œIt has to do more than play gamesâ€• was the admonition from the now Ex.

Atari Star Raiders Game Cover

Two guys in my shop owned Atari computers. One had the 400 and one the 800 model. Sometimes they brought them in and weâ€™d fire them up at lunch and play â€œStar Raiders.â€• Even now, for such a small amount of RAM and a slow processor, the graphics were pretty good 3D effectsâ€¦in B&W, of course. So, I had the bug.

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The spouse agreed we could get a computer but, (see opening sentence) it would perform a number of tasks. We began the journey to find the best computer to allow me to stop wandring into game arcades and going thru a handful of quarters, as well as have some money making ability. The options we shopped were: The TRS-80 series, the Atari 400/800, and the Apple][+. I had no idea there was an IBM PC out there, but a few months ago, seeing a note about the anniversary of the IBM PC, I now realize it pre-dated the Apple][series.

Our analysis was:
The TRS-80 was good for business related stuff, but sucked for games (my priority).
The Atari series sucked for business, but was great at games (her priority).
The Apple][series, was adequate at both, but not superior at either (seemed like the best bet).

Apple][+

So the Apple][+ it was, sometime in October, 1981. We found the Byte Magazine, and the local computer stores and began shopping for the best price, knowing Apple was the most expensive choice. We finally bought it and here were the specs:

Apple][+, 6802 1 Mhz processor, 48K RAM.
We added:
Two 5 1/4â€³ floppy drives, capacity 134K, unless it was used as a system boot disk, then it held 143K on a single side.
80 Column video card, the Videx Videoterm, specifically for word processing tasks
Zenith 12â€³ green screen monitor
C.IOTH StarWriter daisy wheel printer with parallel interface.
EZ Write Professional (I may have this title wrong)
and we had a printer interface cable made (I had no clue as to standard interfaces, so I paid $89 for the education).

Total outlay, in 1981 dollars from an O-3â€™s household budget: $5400.

We still had a free bedroom, one being set aside for the pending arrival of the first born, so the computer was placed then, upstairs and I went to work learning the seeming magic of electronics. We talked to some of the computer store salespeople (most of who couldnâ€™t answer any questions, but would let you go and play with the display models by yourself) and found out there was an Apple club in the area. The Tidewater Apple Worms (TAW) met every Saturday in one of the large classrooms at the Naval Amphious School on the Little Creek, VA base. We wandered in to see how we might learnâ€¦..

(to be continued)

Category

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admin

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