

RAP AROUND

The Computers Are Coming...

... To the High School ... To the Grammar School

By Joan M. Smith

In his 1979 book, "The Micro Millennium," the late Dr. Christopher Evans, psychologist and computer scientist, wrote, "Today, a high percentage of the school children in Europe and America own pocket calculators. In the course of the 1980s," he predicted, "these and a whole new range of products to follow will transform the educational system."



It has happened. Willard McGuire, president of the National Education Association (NEA), recently reported that about one out of every four public schools — about 22,000 in all — now have at least one micro computer or computer terminal for instructional use by students, and more and more classroom computers are being installed all the time.

The Rochester diocesan schools are keeping pace with the trend. Within the last few years the high schools have been using computers in their student course selections, scheduling processes and other activities. Bishop Kearney computerized a forensic tournament it hosted, and this summer Nazareth Academy will utilize its computers for a grammar school teachers training course. Most importantly, however, computers are now a part of student curriculum. And before long, say the prophets, computers will be as popular at home as a backyard swimming pool.

What is this instrument that has captured the space age? What is a computer?

A computer is an electric device with no brains, and as Chris Billings tells his Cardinal Mooney computer science students, "They're not brighter than you, they just think quicker."

This is the first year for the computer program at Mooney but it is only the beginning said Billings. Next year the program will expand to include computer literacy and programming. And this makes Billings happy. He's amazed at the computer expansion in the grammar schools.

"In three or four years," he said, "students, coming from the elementary schools will have a greater background and the high schools should be prepared."

Prepared isn't what the novice students are when they first make contact with the computer. It's a surprise to them to find the computer isn't going to play "Pac Man."

"The students are shocked to see the difference between a video game and a computer terminal," explained Billings. But no matter. They are all eager to skip the technological background

"There's so much to learn," said senior Steve Rendulic but added he enjoys working with the machines regardless.

and go right to work on the terminals. This, however, doesn't happen.

When RapAround attended one of Billings' Tuesday morning classes, he was reviewing previous lessons, giving new information, and demonstrating new equations which could feed the data to the computer for problem-solving. But his class is not all technological jargon. He has also incorporated into the curriculum the history of computers and how man, always expanding his technological expertise, has changed his ideas from adding machines to calculators and now to computers.

The students, in expanding their technological knowledge, have a whole new language to learn. There are words like RAM meaning random access (temporary) memory; ROM,

read only (permanent) memory; hardware, the computer; software, the programming; Basic, Colbol Paschal — just a few of the many languages to be used on computers; variable, a symbol that may assume many different values; and program which is a sequence of instructions that informs the computer of the tasks which the user wants it to perform.

It doesn't take the students long to learn the jargon and once using the terminals they are enthusiastic about applying their knowledge and equations to problem-solving. And they have no hesitancy about asking questions. There are a barrage of them which keeps Billings moving between computers — a situation he enjoys: questions mean interest and the computers certainly have the students' interest.

By Joan M. Smith

Chris Billings, Cardinal Mooney computer instructor, is amazed at how computers have expanded in the elementary schools, and well he might be. At St. John the Evangelist in Greece, preschoolers are becoming acquainted with computers, and Sister Ambrosine Casey, SSJ, school principal, is ecstatic over the growth of computer education in the school.



"It's amazing," says the look on Chris Neary's face as she works the computer between her seventh grade classes at St. John's.

parents are even getting involved. More than 40 of them are being computer trained to monitor evening classes and special workshops like the one held by the school during the recent Winter break. Klein said that 95 pupils opted to return to school during their vacation to take advantage of the computer workshops.

It is this enthusiasm for school that is attributed to the computers. "We feel they (computers) have improved school interest and concentration," said Sister Ambrosine and added, "I feel students' logic will be better."

Mrs. Klein said that the pupils liked math better since they'd been working the computers, and eighth grader Steve Gerken agreed.

"It (the computer) has helped me with my math," he said and added that

According to Mrs. Klein,

computers were not only fun to work with but interesting.

According to Mrs. Klein the excitement is infectious. "The kids are discovering a talent they didn't know they had," she said and explained that they have also realized the computer will not accept mistakes. She laughed when recalling a recent spelling project where the word "repeat" was spelled five different ways. The computer, she said, rejected all the answers until the right spelling was given. The pupils don't seem to object to this expected preciseness. In fact, they welcome the challenge of searching for the right information to give the computer.

St. John computer enthusiasts are learning Logo, a new computer language and philosophy of instruction developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

SPEAKING OUT

By David J. Burger McQuaid

As I continue my long and arduous high school education I have occasionally had time to observe the political beliefs of hundreds of my fellow students. Quite to my continuing surprise, and contrary to many polls which state otherwise, the general consensus appears to be a platform of conservatism. After much thought I have come upon several theories and a final conclusion as to why this thinking prevails. In the end, I have decided the final reason for this phenomenon actually has little to do with the obvious Catholic link.

There are several reasons for this frame of mind. The greatest, however, is the obvious conflicts between American mores and Catholic traditions. The Vatican has long symbolized conservatism and solid unchanged tradition. The issues of birth control,

abortion, and divorce have long been centers of conflict between American Catholics and the pope. Since these issues are among the criteria for classifying an American as conservative or liberal, those pro-birth control, pro-abortion, and pro-divorce are usually known as liberal in outlook. Many faithful and practicing American Catholics are liberal in direct opposition to the established Catholic Church and its laws.

This leads us to yet another question: how effective is the pope? The answer appears to be not so effective. He isn't. In spirit, the pope is the leader to all Catholics, regardless of nationality. However, American Catholics (among others) disobey his laws constantly. American Catholics use artificial birth control methods, undergo abortions, and divorce. It appears that American tradition of "doing your own thing" heavily outweighs the protective shield the Vatican tries to hold over her people.

Therefore, we must now look to other links that join us together. After much consideration my solution to this perplexing question is quite blunt: money.

That is the key. I would not be far wrong if I were to say that the middle to upper-middle American knows where he or she is and is happy to be there. And that is the conservative philosophy. Everything is okay. I'm not too interested in change. I just want my two-car garage and my two cars to put in it.

There is our key! The middle class in America is large and, despite hard times, ever expanding. And along with it, the conservative trend grows as well.

This revelation disturbs me. It makes me (and I hope you, too) wonder. Is the Catholic community still a community or has it dissolved into the class structure? America's Catholics may do well to think about this.



Special Gathering

The Parents Association of Our Lady of Mercy High School will host a Mother/Daughter Communion Breakfast at 9:30 a.m., Sunday, March 13, at the Motherhouse Chapel. Father Patrick O. Braden, CSB, president of St. John Fisher College, will celebrate the Mass. Above, planning the liturgy, are Mrs. Mary Scardetta, Father Braden and Sister Anne Curtis, liaison for the school. Chairing the event is Mrs. Sylvia Boylan, who is being assisted by Mrs. Mary Joan Fix and Mrs. Marcia Mendola.

Aquinas Schedules Blood Drive

Aquinas Institute is holding its second Red Cross sponsored blood drive from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Tuesday, March 15, in the school gym. Anthony Ferrera, health instructor, is coordinating the event with the help of his student committee members, Tom Loewenguth, Alayna Hill and

Monique Cirelli. The school's goal is 90 pints of blood.

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