Photo 1: Two different shots from the balcony of the Civic Auditorium show the extent of the crowd. At the end of the show, chaircreature Jim Warren announced that 12,800 people had attended.

Random Observations and Conversations at the First West Coast Computer Faire

Notes and Photos by Lawrence F Willard

The kids monopolized the computer games most of the time, and were better in their scoring than most of the adults. Said one man to another:

"Those kids have been at the keyboard for 15 minutes; shall we push 'em out of the way?"

"No," said the other. "They're doing a helluva lot better than I know I could do."

There were several variations of Star Trek in evidence. At the Processor Technology booth one frustrated kid kept getting this printout whenever he entered a command:

"Captain, I'm afraid your last command made no sense."

He was lucky. A kid about 12 years old playing Star Trek at the Vector Graphic Inc booth apparently made a king sized error and got this printout:

"Thanks to your bungling the galaxy has been destroyed by the Klingon War Fleet. You are demoted to cabin boy. Try again."

The boy turned around and saw me watching him.

"Don't say anything," he growled.

These games reveal a lot about people to dedicated people watchers like me. At the National Semiconductor booth a computer was set up to plot, on a screen, a graph of the player's physical, emotional and intellectual cycles. You were asked to key in your birth date and to indicate over how many days you wanted the chart plotted. I noted, curiously, that some people used arbitrary dates or somebody else's birth date rather than their own. Are some people reluctant

Larry Willard, who writes regularly for Yankee magazine (Dublin NH), acted as BYTE's roving eye at the First West Coast Computer Faire held in San Francisco's Civic Auditorium on April 16 and 17 of this year. Here are Larry's notes on Random Observations and Conversations at the event.

Photo 2: The mild, unassuming roll top desk at the left of this sequence hides an intelligence. For, when all the doors and slides of this "desk" by RDC Enterprises (8352 Stanford Av, Garden Grove CA) are opened, they reveal an experimenter-oriented computer with built-in Altair bus extender card at desk level, a keyboard at desk level and video monitor. The actual computer mainframe is below desk level behind doors, and the bottom drawer can hold the experimenter's tools.

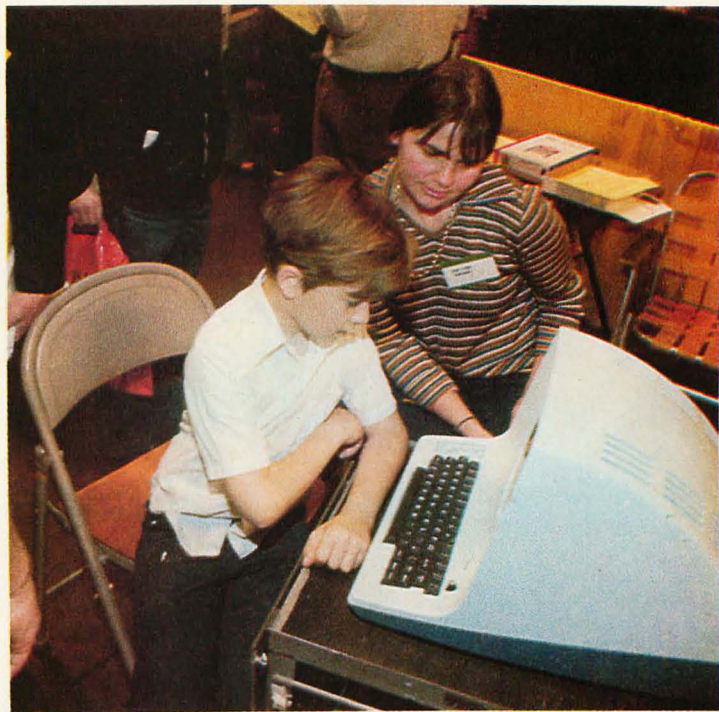# There's an iCOM for Everyone at these Computer Stores...

Photo 3: The kid at the keyboard of this IMSAI 8080 under the watchful eye of Lynn Stone is Bob Bowdige, a fifth grader at Rollingwood School in San Bruno. At this school, 200 students each week study BASIC programming. The school was invited to become part of the exhibit at the Action Audio Electronics booth at the show.

to know what their cycles are, or are they reluctant to have other people see when their highs and lows occur, a privacy thing, perhaps? Anyway, I saw a pretty young lady who couldn't be out of her 20s key in a

Photo 4: Victoria Van Buskirk, 10, with her father Thomas, a programmer at Lockheed in Sunnyvale CA, in the Recreational Computer Centers booth. Tom, with his interests in computer games and home accounting problems, plans to acquire a computer.

Photo 5: The husband and wife team of Ellen and Allen Penn (he's president, she's VP and secretary of Sylvanhills Laboratory Inc, 1 Sylvanway, Box 239, Strafford MO 65757) demonstrate computer controlled plotters to Dick Speer of Northwest Computer Cinema. (For more details on the plotter kit, see BYTE January 1977 page 85.) Dick has a 6502 based computer similar to the KIM which the Penns are using in this setup; he wants to use it for computer controlled graphics.

birth date of October 9 1912. An arbitrary date? The birth date of a parent? Only she knows. The computer took a fair amount of time to figure it all out, but finally traced the patterns on the screen for a 20 day period.

At the Advanced Technology Research Associates booth there were flashing space jewels and Plexiglas ray guns that lit up with a pulsing bright colored light when the trigger was pulled. These fascinated kids and grownups alike, only at 24 bucks and on up the kids weren't buying. The older people were, though. I asked one guy what he planned to use his space ray gun for.

"I'm a magician," he said. "I'll find a use for it on stage."

Another guy wanted to know if the space jewels were waterproof. He thought it might be interesting to drop one of the little flashing pendants into his tropical fish tank, or into a pitcher of his favorite iced beverage. They aren't waterproof; the battery compartment would be flooded.

Like a lot of other people, I had a computer portrait made—you stand in front of a TV camera, your image is held on the TV
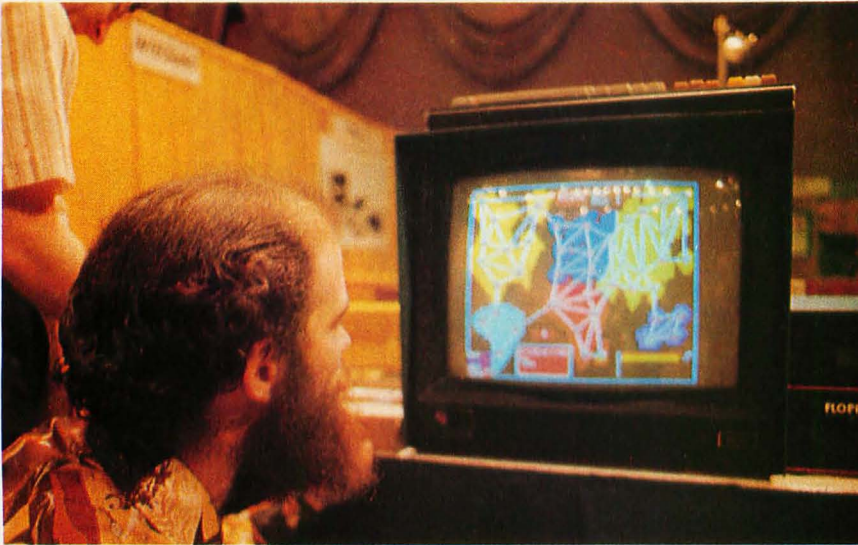
Photo 6: Terry Belcher of Advanced Technology Research studies a map of world conquest for the color video game "Risk" which was being run at the Compucolor booth.

screen until it can be scanned for a computer printout. In about a minute the printer rolls it out and it is torn off and handed to you. The guy in front of me in line made a production out of it. He was bearded, and he wanted a profile shot with a pipe in his mouth and his hand up to it in a studied pose. He explained that he wanted it for his office door.

There were a couple of booths playing computer music and the sound was great, even if the repertoire was a bit limited. About the 15th or so time you've heard a particular tune during the day you can draw the waveforms of each note. But the performance was pretty good. Solid State Music's booth was playing such tunes as "The Flight of the Bumblebee," Bach's "Little Fugue in G Minor," "Blues in F," "It's a Small World," and "Maple Leaf Rag." Try those on your computer.

Footweary after awhile, I went into the cafeteria, got some coffee, and sat down at a table and got into a conversation with two men sitting there. They were Manabu Uyehara and George M Hirota, who have the Radio Shack franchise in Honolulu. They had flown to San Francisco especially for the Faire. Both men have had previous computer experience, and they are anxious to carry computers in their store.

I moved to another table and met Scott M Dickson, a computer programmer in the dental school of the University of Michigan. He wants a computer to experiment with. He thinks dentists could use them for patients' records and for billing.

Coming from the cafeteria I stopped at a booth offering a selection of fine prints and etchings done in sort of a science fiction-fantasy style. One of them, I thought, would look especially fine in my study. Before I could ask how much it was, somebody else did.

"Six-fifty," said the young artist.

Real reasonable, I thought, and moved forward to buy one.

The man who had asked how much, then asked:

"Six hundred and fifty dollars?"

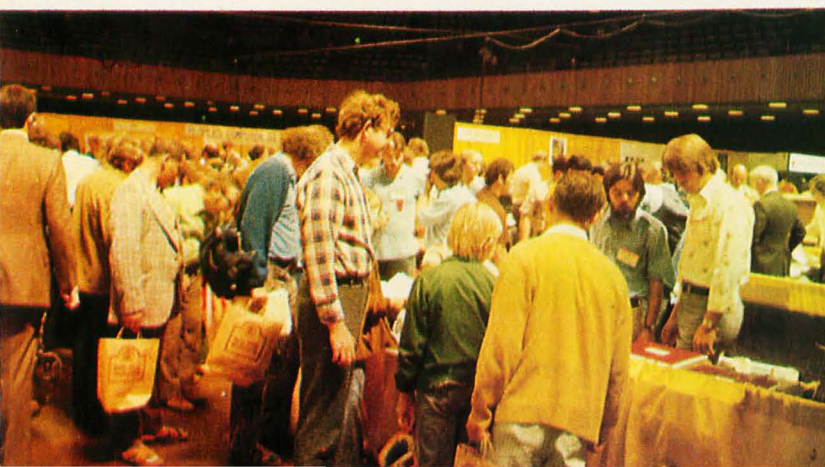The artist said that was correct.

I walked away.

That's more than most of the computers were selling for.■

Photo 7: Some floor shots.