

# Talking computer can teach the blind

By TIM RAVEN

A variety of people and machines were attracted by Texas A&M University's second annual microcomputer show Friday through Sunday.

The display, Micro Expo '78, held by the Texas A&M University Microcomputer Club, was divided into three parts and covered two floors of Rudder Tower.

The sixth floor was a marketplace for computer-oriented electronics companies from around the nation. This part of the exposition was like a small shopping mall at a peak hour. At times, people crowded around the table-top computers four and five deep to see some wonder of a new thinking machine.

An especially popular model was a real talker. The computer, shown by Philip Van Cleave of a San Antonio based firm, could actually speak in English, Spanish and Latin. Once a word or phrase was typed into the machine, the machine would pronounce the word or phrase in the language chosen.

Van Cleave said the machine could be used to teach the blind to type, or could be used as an "attention getter" in stores. He said it could be hooked to a more complex computer for more elaborate tasks.

Most of the computers were programmed to play games. People kept busy at backgammon, Star Trek, poker and other games, while others

watched a bursting kaleidoscope effect of a color video screen.

Also on the dealers' floor was a large collection of books, electronic parts and hardware for sale which made the area resemble a large electronics store.

The third floor was divided into two lecture halls and a "hobbyist" room.

Lectures given Saturday dealt with specialized aspects of the microcomputer. Lectures began every half-hour and were filled with technical jargon that kept the lay-person in the other rooms playing games or gazing at the various demonstrations.

Hobbyists on the third floor were quick to point out the newness of their hobby. Some of them compared the \$800-\$1,000 machines they were "playing with" to commercial-usage machines made 5 to 10 years ago for around \$100,000.

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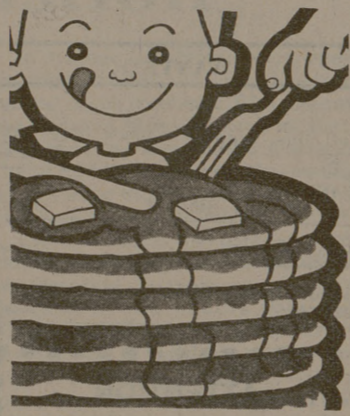
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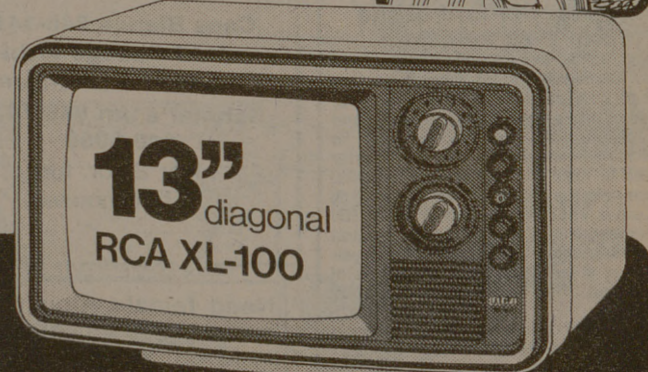
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