

from the Publisher . . .

how **BYTE** started

Two series of events came together and triggered BYTE. One was the surprising response I received from the readers of 73 Magazine (amateur radio) every time I published an article involving computers. Being a curious person I decided to learn more about them, only to find my way blocked by formidable obstacles. The more I tried to dig into the subject the more I found that there was a need for information that was not being satisfied.

The other event was the success of 73, with more subscriptions and advertising calling for some sort of computerization of the drudgery — the billing, record keeping, reader's service, indexing, and such. I knew what I wanted done and had a good idea of what I had to spend to accomplish this, so I started talking to computer salesmen . . . only to find that I wasn't even able to read their literature, much less have even a vague idea of what they were saying.

Some deep well of obstinacy within me fought back and refused to let me throw a dart to pick out the computer system I needed. I felt that as a businessman

running a good sized small business and as the editor and publisher of an electronics magazine, I damned well should be able to come to grips with the salesmen and pick out a computer system on some sort of rational basis. But the more I tried to get information, the more I realized that it was going to be very hard to get.

Between my professional need to understand computers and my amateur interest in the subject I found myself subscribing to one newsletter after another . . . talking at exhaustive length with computer savvy 73 readers . . . reading books . . . and wearing computer salesmen out. I discovered an interesting thing — few of the hardware chaps could talk software — and vice versa. Further, neither could talk much about applications.

There ought to be a magazine covering the whole thing, thought I. A magazine which would help the neophyte to grapple with programming languages . . . would permit the beginner to build microcomputers and peripherals . . . would provide a dialog for the more sophisticated to communicate

as well. How about a publication which would cover all aspects of small computer systems?

As the computer hobby newsletters arrived I looked them over. Some were very well done, some pretty juvenile. One chap was doing a splendid job . . . designing his own hardware . . . developing software . . . plus writing and publishing a monthly magazine on the subject just about single handed. This was Carl Helmers and his ECS Journal, which was in its fifth issue, having just started in January (this at the time being May). I got together with Carl and explained my idea and suggested that it was time to get a good professional magazine going in the field, one which would help computer hobbyists get the information they needed and which might thus encourage manufacturers to come out with more hardware for the growing body.

Carl had been building up his circulation to ECS gradually, with it being about 300 in May. We figured to go all out and run off 1000 copies of the first issue of

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BYTE reader service

To get further information on the products advertised in this issue of BYTE merely tear, rip, or snip out this advertiser index, fill out the data at the bottom of the page, mark the appropriate boxes, and send the works to BYTE, Peterborough NH 03458. Readers get extra Brownie Points for sending for information since this encourages advertisers to keep using BYTE — which in turn brings you a bigger BYTE.

ADVERTISER INDEX

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To help the editors with a profile of the readers — what type of work do you do?

Have you a microprocessor running yet? and which, if so?

Messages for the editor:

Reader's Service

BYTE

Green Publishing Inc.

Peterborough NH 03458

SEPTEMBER 1975

BYTE acquired via

- Subscription
- Newsstand
- Stolen

Please print or type.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

Coupon expires in 60 days . . .

How BYTE started

from page 9

BYTE — make it a 24 pager. After talking the idea over with a couple of the manufacturers in the field it was obvious that we had been thinking too small. Okay, let's make it 5000 copies. The first announcement of the project was made in Hotline, an amateur radio newsletter with a very small circulation. The reaction was immediate: subscriptions began to come in at a good clip.

As mailing lists came in from manufacturers and as the word spread, the first issue print run was upped to 10,000 . . . then 25,000 . . . 35,000 . . . and finally 50,000 copies! As promises of ads came in there was a scramble to get enough articles to keep up with the ads. Ads are certainly of interest, but we didn't want to publish an all advertising magazine.

No apologies are needed for the articles in this first issue — between Carl's contacts and mine we got things started. It would have been a lot easier if our original idea of a 1000 copy 24 page magazine (with maybe 30% ads) had come about. On the other hand, here is a great opportunity for all of you readers to get busy at your typewriter and pass along your particular area of expertise. The need for good articles is great . . . material for the rank beginners as well as the sophisticated computer designers . . . hardware . . . software . . . surplus conversions . . . applications.

As we build a body of hobbyists, the market for reasonably priced equipment will be almost inexhaustible . . . microprocessors, video display units, keyboards, tape gear, discs, teletypes . . . endless list. MITS, RGS, Scelbi and Southwest Tech have a good

start . . . are you going to let them make all the money?

Speaking of MITS et al, it didn't take me long to get one of the Altair 8800s to see what I could do with it. I'm afraid I didn't make it very far into the instruction book. I've got some more memory coming for it as well as their extended basic program and some I/O interfaces to hook onto a teletype or a VDT. I do have a VDT unit up and working . . . the Southwest Technical job which we got in kit form and which was assembled over a weekend on a card table, with a good deal of the work being done by my 12 year old daughter. And, believe it or not, the unit works! We all agree that it was a lot of fun to assemble and we're glad we went the kit route . . . we wouldn't have missed the fun. SWTPC sure did a fantastic job of getting that kit designed and produced.

Well, that's how BYTE got started. Now it's up to you . . . you can guide the magazine with your advice . . . with your articles . . . and with your support in getting more subscribers. We'll do all we can to make the magazine accurate, have plenty of interesting ads, look nice and come out on time. None of this is easy, of course, but we're in one of the nicest areas in the country — in southern New Hampshire — working in a 220 year old colonial mansion — and we have an efficient system where everything except printing and mailing of the magazine is done under the one roof. If you happen to find yourself wandering around a bit northwest of Boston, why please drop in and say hello. We're very friendly and the atmosphere is unbelievably relaxed . . . except near press time.

. . . WAYNE GREEN