Computer Club Trivia

Gathered by Kathryn Taylor with many thanks

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History of Computer Club continued from May
issue

I came to Leisure World in 1980. There was no computer club and probably less than a dozen computers owned by residents. I joined the Electronics club which was located in clubhouse 1. Their cabinets and shelves were full of equipment to build and repair electronic things like TV's. They had two computers called TRS80 version 1 and TRS80 version 2.

When the Electronics club decided to get a computer the most popular home computer was the "Apple". So they went to the Apple store and explained to the manager that they were from LW and had several members in their club and asked whether they could get a discount on an Apple computer. The manager said, "Hell No" and explained that he could sell all the computers he could get. If the club wanted to leave a deposit they would be put on the waiting list. They then went to Radio Shack with the same request and were given a discount.

The Electronics club bought the TRS 80 model 1. It was an 8-bit computer with very little memory and no disk drive. It used a cassette tape to input programs and the only program was Basic. Gradually club members started to buy computers and the club became more computer than electronics oriented so they changed the name of the club to "Electronics and Computer Club".

I bought an Osborne computer which weighed 29 pounds and it was called "portable." It had a 5 inch screen (black and white), two disk drives (90k disks) and 1meg of memory of which 640k was available to run programs. I used CPM for an operating system. In the mid 80's IBM came out with the PC which sold for $5000 and was too expensive for our club. We ended up getting a PC-Junior which had one disk drive (360k) and no hard drive. The Community Association agreed to buy us a disk if we did some programming for them, which we did. We used Database II to do the programming. They had 2000 members and it took us 20 minutes to sort the names. Now we can sort that many names in 2 seconds.

PC-Clones came into being at about half the price of the IBM-PC. The Computer Club got a clone that had the same capability as the IBM-286. In order to get the money to buy this computer the Recreation Department had a campaign asking other clubs to contribute. In return we made programs to create rosters for their clubs. We used Database III+ and each club had different requirements so it required a different program for each club. One club wanted the listing alphabetical with husband and wife together and the husbands name to come first. We charged 10 cents a name to enter data into the roster. Olivia Komp was our data entry person. I did most of the programming.

In the beginning years we had to learn Basic to accomplish tasks: such as, word processing, accounting and organizing data. Soon application programs were on the market. There was a word processor, a spread sheet, and a database. Today we no longer have to program.

During the early years our club was small (less than 200 members). We had a small room in Clubhouse 1 with a door that was shared with the Armature Radio Club. We had one supervisor for each shift and the shop was open 4 hours a day five days a week. We taught Basic, Word Processing and Spread Sheets. Classes were usually 5 persons or less because of space.

About 1990 (1994) Joe Schwarz became president of our club and he set out to accomplish two things. One was to increase the size of the club and to increase our facilities and over the next eleven years he increased the club size to over 2000 and changed meeting and shop space. We now have a first class facility with state of the art computers and programs.