

Number 12 in the series was written on Saturday, 6Nov93. This morning, WB9LNL, N9UNR and I went to Friendly Fest, down in the southern part of Milwaukee. It was a nice morning. Lots of hams were buying and selling. I bought a computer. Paid \$5.00 for it!

I must admit that it was not a complete computer. It was the case, power supply, motherboard and one floppy drive. But it WAS an XT class computer, fully populated with memory.

Saturday afternoon, I completely disassembled it, reseated all the chips, cleaned up all the connectors, and put it back together. Then I added a keyboard (I had an XT model on hand, but also purchased a brand new AT keyboard at the same swapfest for \$18). I added a second (used) floppy, including a used double cable to connect them. New, a drive can be had for about \$50. Then I added a monochrome video board and a monochrome monitor. Had I purchased these new, the monitor would have cost about \$80, and a monochrome board can be had for about \$25. I had all these things on hand, but let us assume they had to be purchased new; here is a tally:

Keyboard	\$	18
5-1/4" floppy drive		50
Video board		25
Monitor		80
Computer	(!)	5
TOTAL	\$	178

Purchased used at a swapfest, these add-ons would have cost much less than half the new price. For example, at the swapfest at about 10:00 a.m., someone offered me a monochrome monitor at no charge! They are readily available for \$20.

Yes, the computer works fine. I had to fiddle with the dipswitches because its previous owner had it set up for a color monitor, but once that was done, it worked perfectly. A full 640 kilobytes of memory. Beautiful little machine.

Why didn't I add a hard drive? Two reasons. First, there was not room. The computer is one of those little square "small footprint" types, and there is just enough room for two floppies. The only hard drive I had laying around was about 1/2 inch too high to fit in the case, even with one floppy drive removed. The second reason is even better, because it is based on the intended use of the computer. I plan to take it up to the Justice Center for use in our OZARES Emergency Communications Center. It will be used for a packet station, and once powered up, it will run 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The drives will be used only occasionally - when booting up the computer, or when a ham needs to download something. Floppy drive motors turn off when unused, but hard drive motors do not - they spin constantly. No need to waste power and the life of a hard drive by spinning the platters day after day for no useful purpose. The floppies will do just fine, and we will have practiced conservation of energy.

The moral of this story is, computer bargains are out there for the asking. If you haven't gotten on packet radio yet because you don't have a computer, you can do it now for very little investment. Don't miss the next swapfest!