Creation of the 1824

Article found and scanned by Larry Bolton for the Club.

BETTER LUCK IN SPACE

Door Jams Computer Wizard

THE MINNEAPOLIS STAR
Business and Markets
Fri., Nov. 5, 1965 ★ 3B

By JIM KLOBUCHAR
Minneapolis Star Staff Writer

A young Minneapolis engineering wizard who helped perfect a tiny electronic brain now guiding American rockets admits he has trouble getting his automatic garage door to open.

"It's one of those electronically operated doors I installed myself," said LeRoy Prohofsky of Sperry Rand's Univac Division. "It's embarrassing when the thing goes on the fritz."

* * *

Prohofsky has better luck with computers that steer Uncle Sam's space vehicles. The government this week granted a patent to a packaging concept that opened the way to development of the 1824 computer, a machine 50-to-1 smaller than the computer systems previously used.

★ ★ ★ ★

Matson Prohofsky

The new technique is the joint brainchild of Prohofsky and a Univac colleague, Charles W. Matson. Prohofsky lives at 6841 S., Knox Av., Matson in West St. Paul.

"There's nothing new about the principle," Prohofsky said. "It's really the logical next step in the push to make computers more compact, lightweight and versatile."

The effect is to package a roomful of critical apparatus into a machine the size of a shoe box.

Missiles and rockets used to be guided by radio from the ground, where there was room for all of the required heavy gear and controlling devices.

The whole complex used to weigh 10 tons.

The new 1824 computer weighs 45 pounds. It was described by the Minnesota Society of Professional Engineers as one of the seven wonders of engineering in Minnesota last year.

★ ★ ★ ★

Its commercial applications for the future are virtually unlimited. At the moment it is being used exclusively for defense purposes.

* * *

"Until the last couple of years," Prohofsky said, "computer devices used in the missile program were tailored for a specific task. Now we have something that can serve almost any purpose, from launching the missile to guiding it in flight. It's all in that package the size of a shoe box."

★ ★ ★ ★

On the market, it would cost upwards of $40,000.

At the core of the machine are tiny, complete-circuit electronic devices no bigger than a quarter of an inch square.

Linked with these are thin-glass memory plates which record 200,000 separate bits of information.

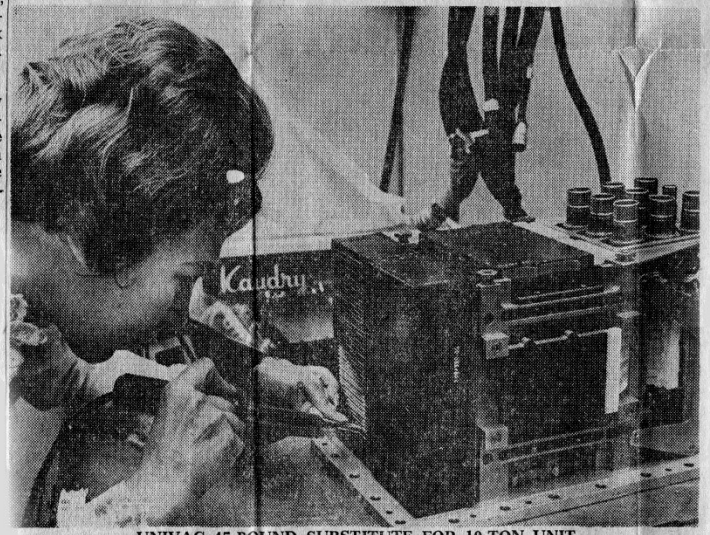
★ ★ ★

In the face of this, the man with a photographic memory has to be put down as a moron.

As a matter of fact, there is a suspicion at Univac that rocket base brass hats have slyly discovered some down-to-earth functions for the new wired genius.

"We have heard," one official said, "that during times when the computer is sitting idle at least one commander put it to work figuring out his payroll."

★ ★ ★ ★



UNIVAC 45-POUND SUBSTITUTE FOR 10-TON UNIT
Assembler Joanne Sautbine inserts a memory plate