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## Canadian hailed as father of PC

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Canada is the birthplace of the telephone and cellphone. Now it has been recognized as the home of another invention — the first personal computer.

It never made a rich man of its inventor, Mers Kutt, who still works with computers and ekes out a living from his Toronto house.

But the MCM-70 Microcomputer, unveiled by Micro Computer Machines 30 years ago today and built at least four years before the Apple, has been recognized as the first of its kind in a recent issue of IEEE Annals of the History of Computing, a respected journal based in the United States.

With only two to eight kilobytes of random access memory and 14 kilobytes of read-only memory, the computer's capacity was small compared with the megabyte-rich machines we have today.
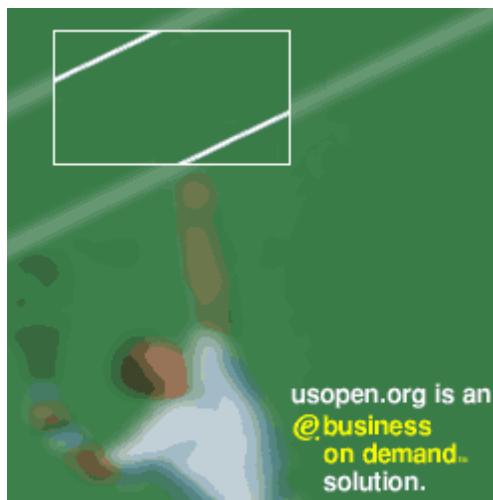
It was the size of a typical typewriter of that time and used a cassette tape instead of a floppy disk to store data.

But it was "capable of running many useful applications," said Zbigniew Stachniak, author of the article and an associate professor at York University.

The creation of the MCM-70 marked a great stride forward in the development of a new generation of cost-effective computer systems.

"It was remarkable to me that they envisioned the need for computers for personal use," Prof. Stachniak said. "They saw people as the target, not only corporations, not only the governments, but that we would require computers on our desks."

Mr. Kutt, a 70-year-old entrepreneur and computer wizard, still speaks enthusiastically, albeit with a lot of computer jargon, about his team building each piece of the machine and software.

"We had a complete working system — the operating system and the language were all in the hardware in a computer," he said in an interview yesterday. "We not only had spreadsheet capability, we had the mother-of-all-spreadsheets right in the computer."

Mr. Kutt is not frustrated that his work hasn't received much attention until now. Instead, he's relishing the moment.

"There are many reason why this is great," he said. "I think in Canada, if anybody gets recognized for something they did, it's good. In some fields — and computers is one of them — we haven't done a lot to acknowledge what has been done.

"We're all proud of having done it. We definitely knew we were doing something that was just a total breakthrough and that nothing else had been accomplished like that," he added.

Although successful in his inventions, Mr. Kutt had some difficulty in business along the way.

In the early 1970s, he was squeezed out of one company, Consolidated Computer Inc., where he had created a data entry system.

Hungry for a new venture, he founded Micro Computer Machines, and eventually the MCM-70 was born. He financed it initially through friends and then got a legal firm to invest in it.

The MCM-70 received publicity, especially in Canada, Europe and the United States. But there were financial troubles and, as Mr. Kutt described it, he was eventually squeezed out of the company. He is still bitter.

As for losing out on a lot of recognition over the past 30 years for the invention of the first microprocessor, Mr. Kutt paused for a moment, and then said: "There's a lot of people out there, and I won't mention the companies, but they write articles about themselves having built it.

"In Canada, we don't really look for big acknowledgments unless they sort of come your way. This was a bit of a fluke the way it all happened," he said with a chuckle.

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