

## Biography of John V. Blankenbaker (Revised version A)

As a 19 year old freshman at Oregon State University in 1949, Mr. Blankenbaker started the design of a computing device but abandoned the project because of the expense. Just prior to his senior year, he worked as a summer student intern at the National Bureau of Standards on the SEAC computer. After graduation from OSU with Bachelors' degrees in physics and in mathematics, he worked at Hughes Aircraft Company. Within months he was assigned to design the arithmetic unit for a business data processor. At the same time, he earned a Master's degree in physics at UCLA. At Hughes, he found that a computer design needed at the most one flipflop if it had the appropriate memory. This was a spur to design an affordable computer for private use. After the Hughes business data processor was terminated because of an apparently limited market, he returned to school at MIT where he earned an Electrical Engineer's degree.

After a short period of consulting, he worked eight years at Scantlin Electronics, an early pioneer in real time communications to bring stock market prices to brokers. In 1970 he judged that it would be good time to build an affordable computer for fun and education. He founded Kenbak Corporation and designed a small computer, the Kenbak-1, which was based on small-scale integrated circuits. One year later he sold the first two of these to a private girl's school. The emphasis was upon the educational market where sales were slow due to budget planning. There were several sales to private individuals both domestically and internationally. As it became obvious that Kenbak Corporation would not be profitable, the design for the computer was sold to C.T.I., a company making products for schools and colleges. At this time, forty-odd Kenbak-1 computers had been sold, most at \$750. Later the Computer Museum of Boston judged this to be "the first commercially available personal computer."

Mr. Blankenbaker then designed a very high performance computer system of very modest cost for International Communication Sciences to analyze four voice streams and transmit them digitally over a single 9600 bps line to be recreated back to voice at the far end. At Symbolics Corporation, Mr. Blankenbaker converted a wire wrap design for a LISP computer to a producible machine.

After a period as communication manager for Quotron Corporation, where they had 13,000 private lines, Mr. Blankenbaker retired and moved to Pennsylvania in 1985. For a short period he assisted Science Products who concentrated on products for the blind. He also taught for a few years at Lincoln University. Among his hobbies were *A Non-Random Walk*, a stock market commentary, which was published weekly for seven years. He then started *Beyond Germanna*, a bimonthly newsletter/journal of history and genealogy which was published for 15 years. To increase interest in an Internet list service pertaining to the Germanna Colonies, he has written 2,200 one page notes.