As I read the 1987 Industry Outlook section of my Business Week (January 17, 1987), the first subtitle I saw under the High Technology section was “The Computer Slump Refuses to Die....” There is no doubt that although 1986 did have a few bright spots, all in all, it closely resembled 1985. Will this malaise continue on indefinitely? Will we continue to see more major international computer and semiconductor integrated-circuit manufacturers merge, be absorbed, or significantly reduce operations?

Perhaps not.

I think that we have reached a point in this industry (from integrated circuits through mainframes) where anything less than top quality is quickly becoming unacceptable. With few exceptions, the days are past when a manufacturer or consumer will accept less than the best because supplies are short. Price remains a major issue. Delivery remains a major issue. At least of equal importance is the technology of the product, be it the individual device, the mainframe, or the software.

I believe that the IC-computer era is not in its midlife doldrums nor has it even approached its peak. It is still early in the game. It is true that there are surely a lot of digital watches and handheld calculators in the marketplace. Many are given away as part of magazine subscription and mail-in merchandise order promotions. However, many fields have yet to be plowed.

I first saw an electronic automobile dashboard exhibited at a New York City automobile show nearly 30 years ago. (I was a young boy at the time.) Yet today, we are only beginning to see it appear in cars. Does an automobile really need that large wiring harness? There are systems being developed that will require only a single wire. There are also electronic automobile collision-avoidance systems and satellite navigation in the works. In other areas we are just beginning to see semiconductor microcomputers control household electric tools and appliances.

It seems that there are an almost endless number of companies making personal computers, especially IBM compatibles, yet many still remain prosperous. There are still a lot of people who have not bought their first computer for their home. There are still a lot of people without a workstation or word processor in their business.

I am privileged by my employment, my attendance at IEEE and Computer Society conferences, my reading of their publications, and my affiliation with IEEE Micro to see a great deal of forthcoming technology in our profession. 1987 is going to be a banner year for technology. Your IEEE Micro editorial board and staff will try to bring you the most interesting and informative articles in our usual in-depth format. The computer revolution is just beginning.

This month we had only 28 comment cards in the mailbag. As usual, I will summarize them:

“More industrial applications....”
G.G.Y. Bogota, Columbia

“MicroLaw..is ‘gripping’....” J.B., Middletown Springs, VT

“(August) (disliked) too much software...liked benchmarks.... (October) OK, but not a memorable issue.”
S.L.J., Austin, TX

“It has taken six months to receive my first issue....” D.R.U., Toronto, Ontario, Canada. (Please accept our apologies; we have remedied the problem.—J.F.)

“(liked) Hypercube article... (dislike) that you are still bimonthly.” C.S.D., Cambridge, MA

“(liked the quality of articles... (dislike) that requests for more information are not sent.” A.R.B, Mexico City, Mexico

(Aside, my apologies. I will try to find out where the problem lies and respond to you directly.—J.F.)

“Free subscriptions requested.” T.H.T., Philadelphia, PA (While I do get extra copies for promotional purposes, I pay full member rates plus Computer Society and IEEE membership fees for my personal subscription.—J.F.)

“Special interest in multiprocessor hardware/software.” R.F.B., Christchurch, New Zealand

“(would like) to see development systems for new microprocessors.” A.L.K., Salt Lake City, UT

“...more about 68030, 68882, FPU devices... Appreciate your editorial variety of content. Keeps me from getting too stale...(I will not need) another graduate degree.” I.A.S., Cambridge, MA

Final note: Bob Morris and Dave Hannum will both be completing their terms on your editorial board with this issue. Both men have been very active contributors to this magazine. In addition to his normal editorial duties, Bob Morris put in many extra hours guest editing the excellent December 1986 issue on digital signal processors. He also willingly provided extensive assistance in making the February 1984 issue the success that it was. Dave Hannum has become well known with his well-thought-out book and product reviews. He has served IEEE Micro for the past four years. A job well done by both.

Best regards,

Jim Farrell