#English\_Reading\_Time

Despite our disappointment, we still believed our future, even if it was not to be in hardware, might have something to do with microprocessors. After I started at Harvard College in 1973, Paul somehow managed to coax his clunky old Chrysler New Yorker cross-country from Washington State and took a job in Boston, programming mini-computers at Honeywell. He drove over to Cambridge a lot so we could continue our long talks about future schemes.

In the spring of 1974, Electronics magazine announced Intel's new 8080 chip ten times the power of the 8008 inside the Traf-O-Data machine. The 8080 was not much larger than the 8008, but it contained 2.70 more transistors. All at once we were looking at the heart of a real computer, and the price was under $200. We attacked the manual. "DEC can't sell any more PDP-8s now," I told Paul. It seemed obvious to us that if a tiny chip could get so much more powerful, the end of big unwieldy machines was coming

Computer manufacturers, however, didn't see the microprocessor as a threat. They just couldn't imagine a puny chip taking on a "real" computer. Not even the scientists at Intel saw its full potential. To them, the 8080 represented nothing more than an improvement in chip technology. In the short term, the computer establishment was right. The 8080 was just another slight advance. But Paul and I looked past the limits of that new chip and saw a different kind of computer that would be perfect for us, and for everyone personal, affordable, and adaptable. It was absolutely clear to us that because the new chips were so cheap, they soon would be everywhere.

Computer hardware, which had once been scarce, would soon be readily available, and access to computers would no longer be charged for at a high hourly rate. It seemed to us people would find all kinds of new uses for computing if it was cheap. Then, software would be the key to delivering the full potential of these machines. Paul and I speculated that Japanese companies and IBM would likely produce most of the hardware. We believed we could come up with new and innovative software. And two of us.

This kind of talk is what college is all about. You have all kinds of new experiences, and dream crazy dreams. We were young and assumed we had all the time in the world. I enrolled for another year at Harvard and kept thinking about how we could get a software company going. One plan was pretty simple. We sent letters from my dorm room to all the big computer companies, offering to write them a version of BASIC for the new Intel chip.

Questions For Reading Passage