



Staff Photo by Larry Spitzer

DO-IT-YOURSELFER George Stege III points to the power distribution center that runs components of the computer he has built in his basement. George says it takes 10 kilowatts to run his computer, more than to power an average home.

Built It Himself

Only Kid on the Block With His Own Computer

By **LINDA STAHL**
Courier-Journal Staff Writer

Two years ago a teen-age Louisville scientist was the first student in the city to build a perfect laser, only 10 years after the nation's top scientists were able to produce one.

Now he's built a computer system that in certain respects exceeds any computer setup operating in the Louisville area.

His computer equipment—all second-hand parts from old computers—fills an entire room. In fact, his latest project

forced his parents to move to another home to accommodate his space needs.

The electronics wizard is 16-year-old George Stege III, a junior and straight-A student at Louisville Country Day School, where few of his science teachers understand exactly how George's computer works.

His principal, John Gernert, calls him "a modest little fellow who gets along with everyone." He is rated as a boy of "higher than average intelligence" and he himself admits he has to study "quite a bit" for German class.

But genius or not, his accomplishments have deeply impressed his teachers.

In his home at 1521 Thackery Drive, George has a basement room for his

See **ONLY KID**

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Continued From Page One

computer components, some weighing more than 1,000 pounds.

The boy's mother, Mrs. George Stege, explained that when her son started purchasing and rebuilding parts in March she hated to see him "work his heart out" and not be able to complete the computer for lack of space. So, she and her husband, a physician, decided to move.

George bought his equipment from an electronics surplus company in Cincinnati and estimates its original worth at \$25 million. He says his parents' investment has been a little short of \$1,000.

George has completely "stripped down" each part and rewired it, a feat which teachers and technicians who have examined his computer can't believe. This meant connecting over 10,000 wires, an "ungodly amount" as George puts it.

George Calls Model Unique

How did he do it? By studying up-to-date manuals and journals about computers made by the nation's top firms in the field. He also has studied electronics at a private technical school since he was 11 years old.

George's model is unique in the Louisville area, he says, "because of the 'variety of input and output devices'—that is, the number of ways of processing information.

"Other computers are faster, but if you don't mind waiting awhile mine can

do more," he says. He explains that it would cost companies too much to have as much new equipment as he has renovated equipment.

George has received a little help from computer experts at Commonwealth Life Insurance Co., where he used their computer to do the "software" facet of his operation, translating his language to machine language on tapes that are then fed into his own computer.

Eventually, he hopes to be able to do this programming process at home.

George shows a great deal of patience when trying to explain his computer to curious visitors. The antithesis of the mad scientist, he is calm, courteous and enjoys cutting up with his high school pals, according to friends.

His parents, obviously enjoying the work of their only child, laugh because he has an electric eye device at the entrance to the basement so he can detect when someone is entering his computer domain. George spends at least a couple hours a day on his project, either in the basement or working at the Commonwealth offices.

What's George going to do with his computer system? Starting in October, he will teach a course for advanced computer students at school. And they'll use his setup for class work.

One of his main concerns now is teaching other students how to operate the computer so they can do programming work on their own.

After George graduates in the spring of 1971, he plans to continue studying math and physical science at college and to donate his computer system to the Country Day School.

Gernert, his principal, is elated at the prospect and plans to expand the school's computer courses to include use of the computer in biology, chemistry and physics classes. "We've got to keep abreast with the times," he says.

While George is contributing to the future of his high school, he's still very vague about his own future.

Some of his friends say his goal is to build the best computer in the entire field.