

Firm practices Old World craftsmanship and service

By MILT THOMAS

Claus Schwanitz comes from Germany, where Old World craftsmanship is the only acceptable kind and business people treat customers like friends and neighbors because they probably are.

It was there Schwanitz first entered the world of computers 25 years ago.

He came from a family whose business was building computer data processing centers. Claus opened his first computer retail store in Cologne, Germany, in 1978, two years before the personal computer revolution started. In 1987, he opened his first U.S. computer store in Philadelphia.

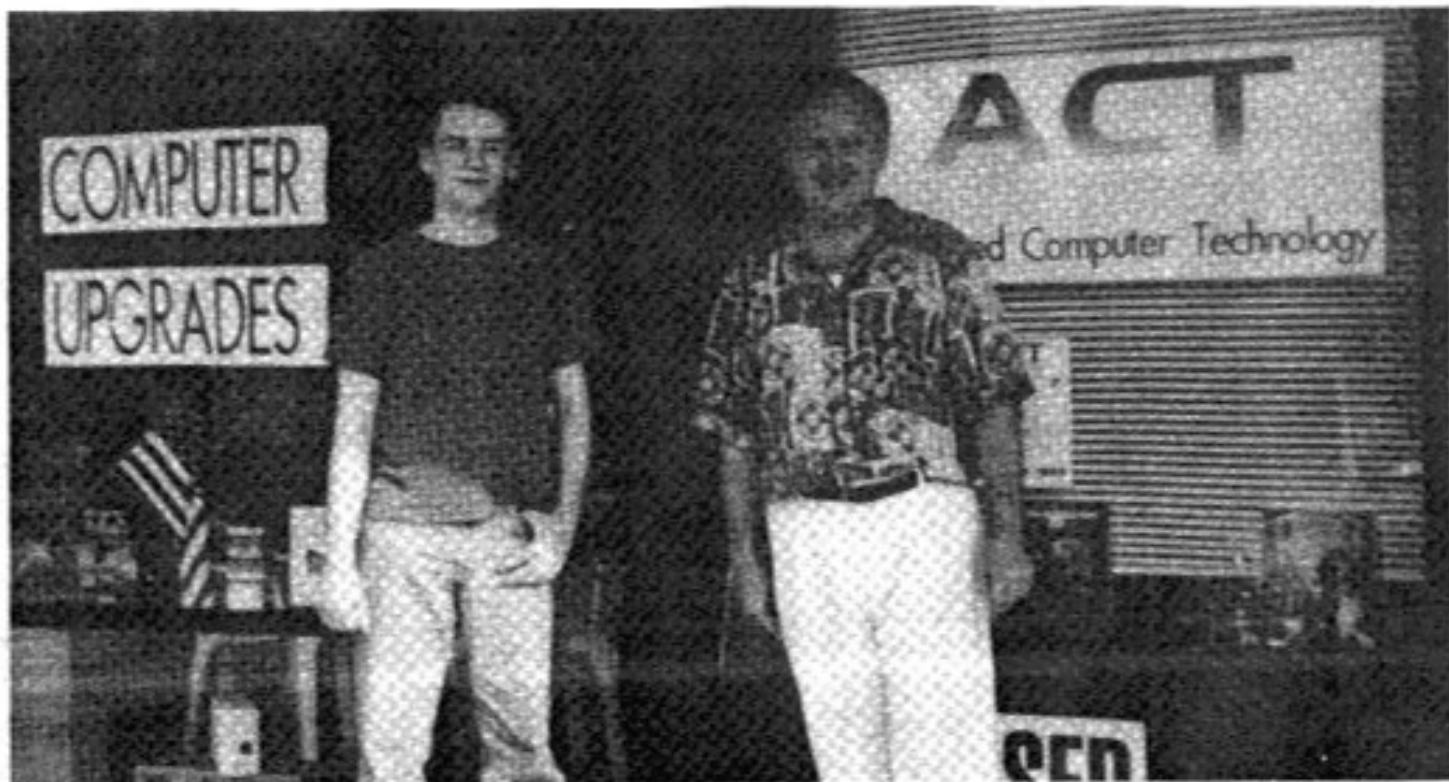
Now, he brings years of experience and a uniquely European approach to computer retailing with his newest company, Advanced Computer Technology (ACT), in Vero Beach. The store is located at 100 South U.S. 1.

The store is laid out like a small office with computer hardware and software displayed in a clean and professionally arranged setting. A pot of coffee always is brewing, and you will never find Claus or his son, Jurgen, too busy to chat.

"After 25 years in the computer business, success still is measured by the number of happy customers who walk through your door," said Claus Schwanitz.

"Change is the constant in this business, with new generations of product coming out almost every year. The chance of selling something new to an existing customer is virtually guaranteed; yet, it is amazing how often customers are unhappy with the service they receive."

With that in mind, Schwanitz is fastidious in his efforts to please customers. He sells only the highest quality computer components and peripherals.



Jurgen and Claus Schwanitz are customer-oriented of ACT Computers in Vero Beach.

"Our Activa Computer Systems are built in the latest style mini- and mid-towers," he stated. "Components and boards slip in easily; there's more room than ever for upgrades; two extra fans are built in to prolong component life. Everything speaks of quality and longevity. We offer a lifetime guarantee on labor and one year on parts, even when the parts manufacturer's guarantee is for less. Our high-quality MAG monitors are guaranteed for two years."

Computer buyers often misjudge what they will need in a new computer. For that reason, Schwanitz takes an unusual approach to the initial purchase.

"I try to find out what the customer plans to do with this computer; I then encourage the customer to start small," he added.

Because his computers are 100 percent upgradable, and the cost of new components seems to get lower every year, the customer loses nothing. More importantly, Schwanitz assures himself of repeat business.

He also picks up business from people who didn't buy their initial computers from him.

"Too often, customers are tempted to buy cheap equipment and upgrades through the mail," Schwanitz said. "Then, they are unhappy with the result and come in here to replace their mistakes with quality merchandise."

Service is a key component of Schwanitz' Old World formula. "I can't understand why someone would promise overnight service and then take three weeks to do the job," he noted. "That is

the most frequent complaint I receive from my new customers."

He not only completes repairs within the time promised, Schwanitz explains fully what repairs were done. That spells "value"—which, in Germany, is a hand-crafted, gold-plated word.

Jurgen Schwanitz is only 19, but shares his father's love of computers. His interest began at age eight, and he even taught computers while still in high school. Today, Jurgen is knowledgeable far beyond his years. According to his proud father, "I'm more interested in the hardware; Jurgen is the expert in software and programming."

Advanced Computer Technology offers free instruction for new computer purchasers through agreement with Don's Computer School.