

# Lisa Williams: Her Changing Goals

“You can get totally caught up in minute details, and not reflect”

Lisa Williams, president of STM, may finally be in the right place at the right time. In 1981, she and two colleagues sat down to decide what the computer industry needed. The answer, they decided, was an 8-bit CP/M machine, the Pied Piper. By the time that machine emerged in late 1982, the industry rats were starting to dance in droves to the tune of MS-DOS.

Williams, an engineer, took a hard look at the market and went back to the drawing board. Now she has leaped ahead of the game with the STM PC—a lightweight computer, with a state-of-the-art full-sized liquid crystal display, and an Intel

study industrial engineering at the University of Toronto. After graduation, she worked for Toronto Dominion Bank, first as part of a roving consulting group that evaluated bank departments, then as the designer of a micro-to-main-frame database system. After hours, she worked for Andicom Technical Products, a company she formed with Frank Holmes and James Ting, both friends from the University.

“At Andicom [the name is an acronym for Analog Digital Computers] we would be given the specifications to produce a prototype with hardware and software,” recounts Williams,

corner.

IBM claims information can be easily transferred among the Assistant Series programs, a capability that is already a strong trait in the PFS family (see review in “Software Family Dynamics,” *PC*, Volume 3 Number 1).

In addition to renaming and repackaging the PFS programs, IBM claims to have enhanced the software itself, making operations, menus, and displays more consistent throughout the

80186, a faster version of the 8088 that drives the IBM PC.

To be sure of getting a supply of 80186 chips, Williams ordered them from Intel 18 months early. “We thought we might be able to sell 20,000 units, so we asked Intel for an order of 100,000—hoping to get an allocation of 20,000—and we did.”

That’s the kind of foresight and luck her small company will need to survive.

## Aussie Engineer

Williams, 31, was born in Australia, the child of two medical doctors.

At 19, she went to Canada to

graphs and charts on the IBM Color Printer.

## Accounting Aids

IBM’s Assistant Series will also include three packages of Solutions—forms that adapt the *Filing Assistant* program for particular tasks. The *Home Solutions* (\$60) set includes files tailored to keeping records of home finances, addresses, birthdays, and stocks. *Executive Solutions* (\$60) maintains a mailing list, checking accounts,



who specialized in software development.

When Andicom was bought out by another company, Nabu Manufacturing, Williams quit her bank job to work for a short time in Nabu’s preproduction group.

## Entrepreneur Bug

But Williams and her old partners had contracted “the entrepreneurial bug.” Every Sunday for weeks, they would meet to decide what sort of product they could produce. “If you’ve got a few hundred thousand dollars in the bank, you constantly ask, ‘What can I do with it?’”

To build the 8-bit, CP/M-based Pied Piper, Williams began laying the groundwork for a major company. Thus, the Semi-Tech Microelectronics headquarters in Toronto, the factory in Hong Kong, the office in London, and the U.S. mar-

## Assistant (continued)

the Assistant Series programs can be used on any PC or XT—and even on a PCjr with 128K and one double-sided disk drive.

When IBM announced the PCjr, it also offered new versions of two PFS packages—*PFS:File* and *PFS:Report*—that could run on the smallest IBM computer.

Now IBM offers enhanced versions of these two programs: *Filing Assistant* (\$149), which