



## HP Forum Archive 12

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### **Yes, I know it's a TI**

Message #1 Posted by [Speck](#) on 23 Apr 2003, 9:12 p.m.

<http://www.shopgoodwill.com/viewItem.asp?ItemID=552161>

Just in case anyone here collects vintage TI's as well. FYI.

Speck.

### **Re: Yes, I know it's a TI**

Message #2 Posted by [Michael F. Coyle](#) on 24 Apr 2003, 12:15 a.m.,  
in response to message #1 by [Speck](#)

Yeah, but it's a *good* TI.

Anyway, it seems like most people on this forum are pretty open-minded about TI's and others. (Even if we think HP's are a cut above.)

### **I've been meaning to ask about that.**

Message #3 Posted by [Christof](#) on 24 Apr 2003, 1:25 a.m.,  
in response to message #2 by [Michael F. Coyle](#)

yeah, by far the most numerous in my collection is HP. But my collection is primarily (not exclusively, but primarily) based on handheld computing technology.

and for me, that means that ideal machines are ones that can be programmed from within the device (yeah, that DOES leave Windows CE machines pretty much out of it- even the Palm platform has better onboard coding tools)

So I've got several programmable TI machines (and a few that aren't, like my lovely 2550, which is really very cool to whip out sometimes)

And I've got a lot of Sharp machines. And you know, they are pretty well designed. aesthetically and functionally. you haven't got a problem finding tapes for your microcassette storage, for example. and serial is the rule from all the way back to 1979ish.

I \*love\* HPs, but sometimes I'm not entirely certain that they are, in fact, the best ever handheld computers all the way through Carlyborging. Though as scientific calculators, they are pretty much without equal all the way through.

**Re: TI 2550**

Message #4 Posted by [Ellis Easley](#) on 24 Apr 2003, 6:55 a.m.,  
in response to message #3 by Christof

It is lovely, isn't it?

One thing I like about the early TI's is the way each model's manual shows how you can do things that are built in to the next model.

**Re: TI 2550**

Message #5 Posted by [Christof](#) on 24 Apr 2003, 12:37 p.m.,  
in response to message #4 by Ellis Easley

The 2550 is really a nice machine for what it is, yeah. I admit I prefer polish- prefix or postfix. I also admit that's probably because my brain seems to be a lispmachine. ;)

I've used the 2550 on tests where only a 43function calc were allowed. And I've gotten some comments. They range from: "dude! that thing is so old, how can you use it?" to "Wow, that's really pretty, where can I get a calculator with a glowing display?"

If I was building a list of favorite calcs, though- sorted by type- the Ti2550 would get my vote in the '4banger algebraic LED' category. (very closely followed by my Computek Mark 5 portable)

**Re: TI 2550**

Message #6 Posted by [Michael F. Coyle](#) on 24 Apr 2003, 1:08 p.m.,  
in response to message #5 by Christof

Yeah, my dad had a 2500. It cost him \$80 at the time. But it was a great little machine. Built like a brick (but somewhat more durable). It lasted for years.

**It's not so clear-cut at all [LONG]**

Message #7 Posted by **John Smith** on 24 Apr 2003, 7:18 a.m.,  
in response to message #3 by Christof

Christof writes:

"I \*love\* HPs, but sometimes I'm not entirely certain that they are, in fact, the best ever handheld computers all the way through Carlyborging. Though as scientific calculators, they are pretty much without equal all the way through."

I agree with you 100%. As a collector, I'm interested not only in HP machines, but other brands as well, and own a lot of both HP and SHARP handheld computers/calculators. It may be the case that die-hard HP fans find what follows outrageous if not downright insulting, but the fact is that a neutral, dispassionate, feature-by-feature comparison makes it plainly clear that most classic, \*vintage\* SHARP machines are much better than most (vintage, I'm not talking about the newer models) HP ones in many respects, including those of ergonomy, durability, aesthetics, and of course programming capabilities, all at a fraction of the price.

They usually boast:

- Beautiful, shiny, fully metallic bodies, very solidly built, which are extremely durable. No HP model has such fully metallic body.
- Large alphanumeric LCD displays (from 1 to 4 lines and from 16 to 40 characters per line), usually dot-addressable for full graphic capabilities, up to 32x160. No vintage HP model has such large displays or graphic capabilities.
- Complete qwerty keyboard and numeric pad. No keycodes, prompted inputs and outputs. Only the very expensive (at the time) HP-71B had both keyboards, the HP-75 had no separate numeric keypad, and no other vintage machines had non-shifted, qwerty alpha keyboards, if at all.
- Serial port (even in the smallest models) for standard I/O, fully configurable with BASIC commands. Most vintage HP models had no I/O capability at all, and the ones which did used HP-IL, an expensive, proprietary standard, which required costly compatible HP-IL devices.
- Can connect to a printer (sometimes plotter) and cassette for mass storage of programs and data. Unlike HP, these were quite inexpensive and quite convenient.
- Non-volatile RAM, both built-in and in the form of RAM cards which keep programs and data even when removed from the machine (so no hurry to replace batteries, and you can instantly bring your programs and data to another machine). Compare that with the daunting task of replacing the batteries in an HP-28S without losing your RAM contents.
- Large amounts of RAM, 10 Kb being typical even in the very smallest models (smaller than even an HP-15C), up to 64 Kb or more. Compare that with the 0.4 Kb or 0.3 Kb available on the HP-15C and HP-32S/SII.

- Powerful, extended BASIC language, featuring 2-dimensional arrays, strings, long variable names, graphic and I/O commands, and plenty of built-in functions. Want to store 200 names and addresses in RAM, up to 80 characters in length ? Simply DIM MYDATA\$(200,2)\* 80 and you're all set. Compare that with the incredible contortions you're bound to make to fit anything complex in an HP-15C, 32S, 41CX, if it can be done at all ...
- Fast processing speeds, typically from 10 to 50 times the speed of an HP-15C, say. For instance, FOR I=1 TO 1000: NEXT I runs in 7 seconds in the smallest models, less than 1 second in the most advanced. Try the equivalent loop on your vintage HP.
- Can be programmed in machine code directly from the keyboard, by using PEEK, POKE and CALL. The processor is usually Z80-like, thus its assembler is quite standard. On the other hand, no vintage HP model is programmable in machine code, except for the costly HP-71B, and the HP-41C requires very expensive hardware to even try. Both have proprietary processor, using a very non-standard assembly language and CPU architecture.
- Full attention given to ergonomics. BASIC functions and algebraic expression can be used and evaluated directly from the keyboard, without programming, you can compute intermediate results in the same line, use the previous result in any part of a new expression, recall the complete expression to the display for editing and re-execution, with all its operators and data. Compare that with LAST X on HP models, which recalls only the last argument in X. Only the HP-71B had that capability. Also, you can assign arbitrary expressions or sequences of characters to keys, for instant execution. Again, only the HP-71B could do that.
- Like HP, SHARP also has specialized models with the same physical characteristics and compatible BASIC language, but including specialized functions such as financial, statistical, logical, matrix operations, and even double precision (20+ decimal digits), all of them fully integrated with BASIC and executing at 15-30 times the speed of equivalent functions in comparable vintage HP models. So you can use all the power and speed of BASIC for your financial calculations, say, dealing with cash flows and IRR computations by using the built-in functions from your program, with the advantage of a large amount of RAM, from 4 Kb onwards. You can also save your financial data on cassette, send them to a PC or modem via the serial port, or print them on the attached printer. Compare that with the abysmal programming features of the HP-12C, the 0.099 Kb RAM you have for your program and data, and then having to record everything (program, data, results) by hand.

In other words, next time you take your vintage HP model out of your pocket and try to impress some fellow by telling him these are the best handhelds in the world, think twice. If you are unlucky, he might produce a SHARP PC-1261 out of \*his\* pocket (10 Kb RAM, 40 Kb ROM, 8-bit CPU, 2x24 char alphanumeric LCD display, full qwerty keyboard, extended BASIC language, serial I/O port), which is \*smaller\* and much faster than your HP, and make your bombastic claims sound utterly hollow. Specially if there are more people present, that could be very bad to your morale, and the resulting ridicule could shatter your HP faith for good.

### **Re: It's not so clear-cut at all [LONG]**

*Message #8 Posted by [Chan Tran](#) on 24 Apr 2003, 8:15 a.m.,  
in response to message #7 by John Smith*

I collect mostly HP calculators, but I am now getting some TI. I especially interested in models that were competing with the HP models that I bought i.e TI50 or 51 vs HP25. TI 58 & 59 vs HP41C etc... I wanted to see if I missed something by opting for HP instead of TI.

**Re: It's not so clear-cut at all [LONG]**

Message #9 Posted by [Ellis Easley](#) on 24 Apr 2003, 8:18 a.m.,  
in response to message #7 by John Smith

I've got a 1261! with the cassette/printer interface, barely used. I agree the Sharps are very striking in appearance, as are some of the Casios. I also have the first pocket computer Radio Shack sold - is that a Sharp?

I got my 1261 from a co-worker who also sold me my 41C which had belonged to another co-worker before him who had given it plenty of use. The guy who sold them to me was an older fellow who wasn't finding the machine that he was looking for. Today he is probably happy with an organizer. I haven't done much with the 1261 and I remember being disappointed that I couldn't program it in machine language. I just now scanned the manual and I don't see PEEK and POKE or CALL. Are they undocumented?

**Re: It's not so clear-cut at all**

Message #10 Posted by [John Smith](#) on 24 Apr 2003, 9:37 a.m.,  
in response to message #9 by Ellis Easley

Ellis wrote:

*"I've got a 1261! with the cassette/printer interface, barely used."*

Congratulations !

*"I agree the Sharps are very striking in appearance, as are some of the Casios. I also have the first pocket computer Radio Shack sold - is that a Sharp?"*

Yes, the TRS-80 PC-1 is an exact clone (less the SHARP logo) of the SHARP PC-1211 pocket computer, which was the very first of its kind, released at the time of the HP-41C, with nearly 4 times the memory of a bare-bones HP-41C, 2 times larger dot matrix yellow LCD, fully metallic body, and BASIC language to boot, at less than half the price. It sold extremely well and gave birth to a new class of handheld computing capability. It, as well as the TRS-80 PC-2, PC-3 and PC-8 were SHARP machines manufactured specifically for Tandy.

*"I haven't done much with the 1261 and I remember being disappointed that I couldn't program it in machine language. I just now scanned the manual and I don't see PEEK and POKE or CALL. Are they undocumented?"*

Yes, they are undocumented, but present and functional nevertheless. Have a look at this page (and the whole site):

[PockASM Macro Assembler for Sharp Pocket Computers](#)

### **Thanks!**

*Message #11 Posted by [Ellis Easley](#) on 24 Apr 2003, 10:41 a.m.,  
in response to message #10 by John Smith*

Now I'll have to get programming!

### **Aldweb site**

*Message #12 Posted by [Ellis Easley](#) on 24 Apr 2003, 11:02 a.m.,  
in response to message #10 by John Smith*

I hope I didn't shut down the Aldweb site, it has become unavailable past its home page. The site linked from the Aldweb page that was linked here, that had an upgraded assembly language system, rather hosed up my computer - that window became uncloseable and unresponsive and slowed other windows to a crawl.

### **Re: Aldweb site**

*Message #13 Posted by [Ellis Easley](#) on 24 Apr 2003, 12:38 p.m.,  
in response to message #12 by Ellis Easley*

I guess not, it's OK now.

### **Re: It's not so clear-cut at all**

*Message #14 Posted by [Christof](#) on 24 Apr 2003, 12:11 p.m.,  
in response to message #10 by John Smith*

The Sharp 'Thing' with onboard BASIC, assembler capability, and z80 like cpus has extended all the way until very recent times in the parts of the wizard series.

I'm currently hunting a few down after having played with a friend's- while I like the 71 keyboard a lot more, these machines look like perfectly acceptable replacements for any windows CE device (with the sole exception of wireless networking).

I've always found that the programming interface of the sharps and the HPs was ... well, empowering to the user. The ability to write code, even very simple code as demonstrated in the cookbook portion of a manual, makes a lot of difference in your relationship to a machine. To quote Herbert "Without Me, You're Nothing." (referring to a computer.)

P.S.- all this sharp loving aside, I'm still quite fond of my 41/42/48/75/71 machines. and RPN. But HP did make a few errors in interface design and LCD capabilities.....

### **Re: It's not so clear-cut at all [LONG]**

*Message #15 Posted by **Ex-PPC member** on 24 Apr 2003, 10:01 a.m.,  
in response to message #9 by Ellis Easley*

You're right, the first Tandy pocket computer was a clone of the Sharp PC-1211, only with the TRS logo instead of Sharp's one.

It is a really beautiful machine and, for the time, truly state-of-the-art. And very capable, too. I wrote some 100+ programs for it back then, and frequently was amazed at the tremendous ease with which you could program almost anything on it. For instance, I remember a 6-line program to solve the "Towers of Hanoi" puzzle for any number of disks, as well as an equally short program to solve the "N-queens" chess problem, also for any N. Writing those same programs for the HP-41C was much, much more difficult, and resulted in quite long listings, a far cry from the minuscule BASIC programs implemented for the PC-1211.

### **Re: It's not so clear-cut at all**

*Message #16 Posted by **Richard Garner** on 24 Apr 2003, 9:49 a.m.,  
in response to message #7 by John Smith*

It's not programable, but one of the best calculators I have ever used is a Commodore SR9091R. It is 26 years old, and aside from looking a little worse for wear and having the batteries rebuilt several times, it still works.

### **did you mean...**

*Message #17 Posted by **db(martinez,california)** on 24 Apr 2003, 1:31 p.m.,  
in response to message #16 by Richard Garner*

... the SR 9190 R ? my favorite Commodore is the 4921. it's like the 4912 - but RPN.

### **Re: did you mean...**

*Message #18 Posted by **GE** on 24 Apr 2003, 5:15 p.m.,  
in response to message #17 by db(martinez,california)*

Commodores are great, some are really weird, but I like better the Sharps. Basic is so readable, amazingly slow at the beginning (on the 1211), but quickly improved.

Had BASIC machine been equipped with graphic displays, they might have wiped the competition from the face of the world (yes the 71B has a graphical display, the PC1500 too, but way too small).

If you want to show off a bit, you'd rather use a nice EL5100 (the predecessor to the PC1211). Was not a BASIC machine, but had the FIRST alphanumeric display EVER (yes, I think so). So now try to prove me wrong. Also, to show off even more, there are rarer models...

On the TI side, there are quality models. It is and was just a matter of price (price being a matter of target market anyway).

Side note : good thing that HPers start to become nostalgic on some other brands too !

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