

WYSICRAP - The Tandy WP-2

Back when we had to start the car by hand, walk 4 miles to school uphill...both ways and the milkman was still

blamed for kids that didn't quite look like mom "or" dad, computers sat on a desk. Portability meant fitting

in a backpack (first baby Macs) or, in the case of early laptops something that weighed about nine or ten pounds.

So, as a young college student in the early 90's the only options you had for taking notes was a pen and paper

and any typed assignments required you either owned your own computer or hunkered down in one of the campus computer labs and made damn sure you didn't forget your box o' disks.

Then one day while flipping through a circular for Radio Shack I saw an ad for the **Tandy WP-2 Word Processor**. I immediately thought "dude, you HAVE to have this!". It was on sale and I believe if memory serves it was \$199. It had a full keyboard, 32K of memory with an expansion slot for extra memory, a monochrome LCD screen that displayed about 9-10 lines of text at a time and full word processing capability including spell checker and a dictionary. It also had parallel and serial ports. In sum, for the time if you needed a small, light, full-featured word processor that was no larger than a standard textbook this was pretty much your only option. So, I got one. Here she is:



The first time I took it to class I remember all the weird looks from classmates and my professors. Everyone wanted to know what the hell it was and where I got it. The budding inner geek in me (I say budding because it would be a few more years before I achieved full geekhood) was like, "oh yeah, this is cool!". I used it for the last year and a half plus I was in school. It fit neatly in my bookbag and

I didn't have to rely on messy notebooks and spirals coming unspiraled and every day I could dump all my notes on to my home desktop so they were neat and searchable. I really dug that thing. The WP-2 was a truly unique device for its time.

Fast-forward some 20 years later and laptops are as common as pencils and as cheap as my little WP-2 was back in the day. They also do and store a heckuva lot more than my WP-2 could ever dream of doing. From a technological perspective there's no comparison between the technology we have today and what I was using back when I got my first degree. From a purely personal point of view though, the Tandy WP-2 had a cool factor that can't quite be touched today. It was new and it was the first and there was nothing like it then and, for obvious reasons, there's nothing like it now. Do I love my ultrabook, sure. Does it ever elicit the kind of reactions I got to my WP-2? No way.