Customer Corner

Meet Namir Shammas

Editor's note. Customer Corner has appeared in past issues of *HP Solve* where we interviewed the worldwide users of HP's calculators. Past interviews have been of users who live and work in the US, UK, Canada and Germany. We now go to Richmond Virginia for our next interview.

HP Solve: What is your background?
Namir: I am a native of Baghdad, Iraq. I attended an elementary school run by *the British and a high school that was run by American Jesuits from Boston College. I came to the US in late 1978. I speak Arabic, French, and English.*

HP Solve: What did you study at school?
Namir: I studied chemical engineering at the University of Baghdad and at the University of Michigan.

HP Solve: What is your occupation?
Namir: I am retired now. I have worked in the water treatment business, writing programming language books, and writing technical documentation for corporations.

HP Solve: Do you do much traveling?
Namir: I have traveled a lot since childhood. My parents felt that traveling was a form of education one cannot get in school. I still travel a lot now with my wife and visit various countries and continents. We visit places I never thought I would ever see. I used to travel for a water treatment company and take my HP-41C and its accessories with me.

HP Solve: Have you noticed anything interesting about calculator usage during your travels?
Namir: While living in Paris in 1978 I did see HP promoting the HP-34C (and other HP models) in some local electronics shows. Once the PCs became more popular, I saw less of calculators while traveling.

HP Solve: When were you first exposed to HP calculators?
Namir: I learned about the HP-65 in 1974, while still in Iraq, when my brother showed me a two-page advertisement for that machine in a French business publication. I had never heard of HP before that. The notion of a personal programmable machine captured my fascination. I was determined to buy one from Europe by 1975.

HP Solve: When did you first see or use an HP calculator?
Namir: Since HP calculators were not sold in Iraq, I actually never saw an HP calculator until I bought one from Switzerland in 1975. In 1974 I did borrow the manual of the HP-35 from a local friend to learn about that machine, learn about working with the stack, and understand RPN (Reverse Polish Notation).

In mid-August 1975, I arrived in Switzerland for vacation. My family (who was already there) handed me fliers for the HP-65, HP-45, HP-21, HP-25C, and the HP-55, right out of the airport! I carefully studied the features of each machine to decide which one to buy. On August 22, 1975, I bought an HP-55 from the Geneva airport. I learned to master the HP-55 and use it well in my chemical engineering studies.

HP Solve: What machine did you buy after your first?
Namir: I was able to buy an HP-67 while still in Iraq. HP had an office there to sell minicomputers to the government. I ran into an HP calculator salesman (who was an Iraqi working out of Athens, Greece, then HP's center for Middle East sales). The salesman, who was impressed of my use of the HP-55, agreed to sell me an HP-67 calculator.

*HP Solve: **What HP calculators have you used since?***
Namir: I have used many HP calculators since. The long list includes the HP-41C, HP-41CV, HP-41CX, HP-29C, HP-33C, HP-34C, HP-42S, HP-71B, HP-75C, HP-48SX, HP-48GX, HP-49G, HP-50G, HP-32SII, HP-33s, HP-35s, HP 39gII, and the HP Prime. Recently, I have collected the emulators for many of these machines running on the Apple iPad and the Android tablets.

*HP Solve: **What have you used your calculators for?***
Namir: I used HP calculators for college, work in water treatment, and in exploring statistical and numerical algorithms.

*HP Solve: **Does your calculator usage involve more than your profession?***
Namir: Yes, I program calculators to implement legacy numerical analysis algorithms as well as try new methods that I develop. Since vintage calculators are slower than PCs, the speed of these algorithms becomes very tangible. Thus calculators are excellent computing devises that give you a very good feel for the speed and efficiency of numerical/statistical calculations.

*HP Solve: **What was the largest problem you have solved with an HP calculator?***
Namir: A few years ago, I developed a 400-page statistical pac for the HP-35s. The programs in this pac were a complete rewrite of a comprehensive set of statistical pacs and user library solutions for HP-65, HP-67, and HP-41C. I also added a few new statistical programs to take advantage of the HP-35s' large memory and ability to pack multiple numbers in each stack/memory register.

*HP Solve: **What are you currently using HP calculators for?***
Namir: I use HP calculators to test legacy numerical methods, regression analysis calculations, and testing new numerical methods.

*HP Solve: **What appeals to you about HP calculators?***
Namir: I enjoyed the quality of HP calculators, the support for RPN, expandability of certain HP calculator models, and the availability of rich sets of functions - HP typically stays ahead of the pack.

*HP Solve: **Do you have a website?***
Namir: Yes at www.namirshammas.com. My web site has a lot of postings for HP calculators.

*HP Solve: **What are the important aspects of your website?***
Namir: New algorithms that I develop and also material for HHC presentations that I make.

*HP Solve: **Do you write or post calculator articles on your website?***
Namir: Yes I do.

*HP Solve: **Can you explain in more detail?***
Namir: I post programs for HP calculators, present programs for vintage pocket computers that work with BASIC, list new algorithms that I design, and offer free tutorials for the open-source R statistical language.

*HP Solve: **Have you had contact with HHC?***
Namir: Yes of course. I have been a member of PPC, CHHU, and now HHC.

*HP Solve: **How many HHCs have you attended?***
Namir: About nine conferences in the last ten years.

*HP Solve: **What have you gained from the HHCs?***
Namir: HHC conferences are wonderful for fellowship with like-minded calculator enthusiasts. I often present new numerical and statistical algorithms to HHC attendees - an ideal audience for me. In addition, HHC is a wonderful place to learn about new HP calculators.

*HP Solve: **Do you have a calculator collection? How extensive is your collection?***
Namir: I have a little museum of vintage calculators at home. My collection includes all scientific and programmable HP calculators.

*HP Solve: **Do you have any "special" HP calculators?***
Namir: I have the HP-41CL that contains a special board created by Systemyde. The HP-41CL contains just about all of the pre-programmed ROMs that HP made. Another special calculator is the WP34S which is a repurposed HP-30b (or HP-20b) calculator that implements a superset version of the HP-42S. The WP34s was created by Walter and Pauli.

*HP Solve: **What does your family think of your interest in calculators?***
Namir: They think that I am an eccentric "genius". I am just a dedicated low-level math/stat hobbyist. You can think of me as a hobbyist astronomer competing with professional astronomers. Even hobbyist astronomers sometimes discover heavenly bodies in our wide cosmos!

*HP Solve: **What kind of HP calculator would you like in the future?***
Namir: The HP Prime is a step in the right direction since it brings with it an amazingly rich set of functionality. I would like to see Wi-Fi-enabled HP calculators that run Matlab-like software or R-like statistical software.

*HP Solve: **What other HP calculator related projects have you worked on?***
Namir: Last year I published four HP 39gII programs in *HP Solve*. These programs demonstrated the power of the HP-39gII in performing amazing sets of regression modeling. The good news is that these HP 39gII programs are completely compatible with the HP Prime.

*HP Solve: **Do you have any additional comments that may be of interest to *HP Solve* readers?***
Namir: Students and professionals who are interested in using programmable calculators can perhaps best benefit from a Wiki site where they can locate material they need. While *HP Solve* keeps its readers updated with news about HP calculators and their applications, a Wiki site would serve as a wonderful repertoire of applications and techniques that can serve the readers for a long period.

30. *HP Solve: **Thank you for spending your time with us.***