

Meet Jo Vandale

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 Belgium for our next interview. Jo Vandale attended CES 2012 where we had a calculator users dinner and an opportunity to "catch up." See photo in the From the Editor column.



HP Solve: *What is your background?*

I was born in Belgium, Adinkerke on 16 February 1959. Adinkerke is a small city 2 Km from the coast and the French border. Our house was just next to the attraction park "Meli" which in the mean time changed name to "Plosa Land". Until 12 did go to school in Adinkerke, Veurne and Ostend. I start working at Philips in 1981 and I'm still working at Philips. In 1982 I moved together with my girlfriend Annie to an apartment in Bruges close to the Philips premises. 10 years later I invested in a house and moved to Oostkamp which is only 10Km from Bruges. I have a son, Ruben, born in 1998 so currently 13 years. My hobby's were initially electronics, software & airplanes, as of today in more F1 and software (web development). Together with my brothers Hans and Geert I also run a company providing IT support and web design to small companies (less than 15 seats) and individuals (www.petss.be).

HP Solve: *What did you study at school?*

Industrial Engineer Electronics which is now redefined as Master in Electronics.

HP Solve: *What is your occupation?*

I work already more than 30 years for Philips. I started in de factor, moved to hardware development, later to software development and from there to advanced development also known as Know How. The latter was all locally to Philips Bruges who did grow in 25 years from a support factory lab to a real development lab. The last 5 years I have in fact 2 jobs; I'm responsible for the programming and tracking of the Advanced Development within TV but now on a global level, next to advanced development I'm also managing competition research, benchmarking and Value Engineering also within TV. Both jobs are challenging and sometimes really connected to each other.

HP Solve: *Do you do much traveling?*

Not for the moment due to travel bans within Philips. I traveled more in the past when I was involved in some standardization activities. I normally go to the IFA fair in Berlin and the CES in Las Vegas. Next to that a go once or twice to Bangalore (Philips Software Lab) and Singapore (Philips Development Lab). Next to that I travel within Europe with my family during the holidays. I'm planning to visit the US a few times in the future when my son is a few years older.

HP Solve: *When were you first exposed to HP calculators?*

My first calculator was a Texas TI-SR50 (1975) followed by a TI-SR56 (1976) only a year later. The TI-SR56 was also my first programmable calculator with only 10 registers and 100 steps. The program "Moonlander" was one of my favorite programs on the 56. In 1977 I bought a TI-58 and upgraded it only 6 months and 4 repairs later for a TI-59. As the TI-59 wasn't more reliable than the TI-59 and for that reason more in repair than in use I start looking to Hewlett Packard as a possible alternative. I played with some units in the shop to learn something strange named RPN and came in love with a information flyer of the HP-41C to be released a few months later. I got one of the first if not the first HP-41C sold in Belgium. It got it on a Friday evening around 8pm from the shop owner who specially drove up and

down to the Belgian HP headquarters in Brussels to get a unit from the first batch delivered in Belgium. I worked through the manuals in 2 days and started a dream ... which in fact never stopped. After the HP41C, CX and all the accessories I had several other HP calculators as I started collecting them, however none of them ever reached the same level of experience and joy. From normal programming it moved to synthetic and assembly, made a speedup solution and even a keyboard controlled version. Later I designed my first ROM and RAM box and together with Chris Blancke I created a DMA interface to the Commodore 64 which allowed us to write and change code on the Commodore 64 while the HP41 was running !!! A beauty in my collection is a huge fully functional HP-33E which was used in the earlier days to learn RPN to students. With a core of 5 people (André Dehondt (chairman), Philippe Roussel, Rudy Mariman, Gino Matthys and myself) we started back in 1981 the HP-41 calculator club PCC Belgium. 3 years later I took over the chairman function as Andre left the country for a new life on the other side of the globe. In the process of combining PPC Belgium with the Belgium TI User group the name of the group changed to PCX (Pocket Calculator eXchange).

HP Solve: What have you used your calculators for?

Nowadays only for simple calculations and small programs ;-) In the earlier days for about everything; mathematics, problem solving, gaming, interfacing, controlling ...

HP Solve: Have you noticed anything interesting about calculator usage during your travels?

Not in special, to me my 41 was killing my travel time ;-)

HP Solve: Does your calculator usage involve more than your profession?

Yes, it was a hobby as you can read above.

HP Solve: What was the largest problem you have solved with an HP calculator?

To be honest, I don't remember. The most challenging was definitely a synthetic HP41 program writing its own subroutines before executing them.

HP Solve: What are you currently using HP calculators for?

Nowadays only for simple calculations and small programs ;-)

HP Solve: What appeals to you about HP calculators?

The simplicity of RPN once you step over the learning hurdle.

HP Solve: Do you have a website?

Yes as user group PCX we have a website, <http://www.petss.be/pcx/> which we are currently upgrading to based on a Joomla CMS to give it a new and better look. In the earlier days we had the domain name www.pcx.be which we lost 5 years ago when our group had a dip ☹. As of today only the pages "Infodays" and "Last Minute" are up to date.

HP Solve: What are the important aspects of your website?

Not many for the moment with the exception of some nice articles in the "Last Minute" section.

HP Solve: Do you write or post calculator articles on your website?

Yes, see "Last Minute" and "PCX Articles" sections.

HP Solve: Have you had contact with HHC?

Contact yes at conferences and on other places, but I was never at location in the US.



Fig. 1 – Big HP-33E on website.

HP Solve: *How many HHCs have you attended?*

None ☹

HP Solve: *Do you have a calculator collection? How extensive is your collection?*

Yes, a rather big one. I never calculated the total cost.

HP Solve: *Do you have any “special” HP calculators?*

I have two HP-35 calculators and the big HP-33E. Ed. As shown in Fig. 1.

HP Solve: *What does your family think of your interest in calculators?*

They are not really interested in calculators or calculator meetings. However, they never hampered me in running PCX or any other calculator activity.

HP Solve: *Do you have any additional comments that may be of interest to **HP Solve** readers?*

I don't know if the calculator still has a long future. It will still be used in schools as an educational tool and many others will still use them for basic calculations. However I don't see it any longer as a real programming unit to solve problems as better and faster alternatives are available already today.

That is one of the many reasons why PCX, already a few years ago, expanded its boundaries to portable devices to keep the club running ... in which we did succeed until now ;-)

However, as long there is enough enthusiasm (Richard N.) you should never stop doing the thing you enjoy every day! **We're never gonna survive, unless ... We get a little crazy** (Seal).