

Like true love, personal digital assistant hard to find

I admit it: I'm a sucker for a handheld.

Starting with the Sharp Wizard, then the Apple Newton, through several incarnations of the Palm Pilot (the Pro and the Palm III), on to Windows CE palmtops from Casio and NEC and even the credit-card sized Rex, I have tried them all.

But none offered a meaningful relationship.

I crave computer convenience. I want a PDA (personal digital assistant) to streamline my life, let me lose the big and bulky Franklin Planner, to keep track of appointments, contacts, tasks, memos and the miscellaneous.

But, like true love, the perfect device has been hard to find. After the initial rush and the first flirtations with the others, I always, reluctantly, returned to the trusty old Franklin Planner.

But now, finally, I think my heart has been truly won by a handheld.

I type this on a tiny little marvel of a machine called the Jornada 820, from Hewlett-Packard. It's small, but not so small you can't easily type on it. Weighing in at 2.5 pounds, measuring 9.7 inches long by seven inches wide and 1.3 inches thick, it's much smaller than my Monarch-sized Franklin Planner.

Yet this device has an 8.2 inch color LCD screen that is easy to read in any light, contains all the familiar Windows '98 programs I use on my desktop computers, a built-in 56K modem, a web browser and an e-mail program.

The Jornada lists for \$999, though you can buy it from online computer Web sites or through some of the big computer stores for as little as \$850.

PC MIKE



MIKE WENDLAND

I type this on a tiny little marvel of a machine called the Jornada 820, from Hewlett-Packard. It's small, but not so small you can't easily type on it.

For two weeks now, I've tried to transition between paper (my Franklin Planner) and electronic (my Jornada). Increasingly, the daily notes page on my Franklin Planner is blank.

The Jornada is powered by an upgraded version of Microsoft's CE operating system called CE Pro, though Microsoft says it is going to change that name to avoid confusion. And while it is nowhere near as powerful as a full-fledged Windows 98 or a Pentium computer, the Jornada is quick enough to satisfy my on-the-go needs.

It comes with a standard 16 megabytes of memory that can easily be expanded by buying optional PC memory storage cards that plug into slots on the side. One of the features I like best about the Jornada is its "instant on" ability, meaning that there's no time delay when you want to use it. Hit the "on/off" button and, instantly it's up and running, compared to the normal 30-second or more "boot time" for a full-featured laptop or desktop.

There is no floppy disk drive. The Jornada is meant to "synchronize" with your main desktop PC. Plug a serial cable between the two and the files are automatically synchronized. You can drag and drop specific files from one machine to the other with ease.

All that's great. But what I like best is the battery life. I started this day at 6 a.m. and took the Jornada to a video shoot in the morning, where I logged camera shots, wrote a script, even checked my e-mail a couple of times. In the car, on route to other appointments, I turned it

on to look up several phone numbers for cellular calls I needed to make.

This afternoon, during several meetings, I whipped it out to check my calendar and used it to make notes. I even ran a short PowerPoint presentation from my Jornada to show a group of business associates a Web site I'm developing.

Now, in a restaurant in Birmingham, I'm writing this column at the table while I wait for my wife to show up for dinner. HP advertises 10 hours with the standard battery, 15 or more with an extended power unit. I just checked my battery status. After all my usage today, it shows I still have 85% of my battery power.

Last week, I took it on a two-day road trip and used it extensively without recharging. There was still enough battery power to write a business proposal on the return flight to Detroit. How much do I like the Jornada? So much so that I bought it, even though as a high tech reporter I probably could have talked the PR people at HP into lending it to me as an evaluation unit.

One noon hour test drive on it at Comp USA was enough to persuade me to pop out my credit card. I've seen a lot of handhelds. This one stole my heart. I'm still smitten, two weeks later.

Cops ... there's Mrs. PC Mike now. She thinks me enough of a nerd that I'd better turn this off before she gets to the table. If you want to learn more about the Jornada, go to the HP site on the net (www.hp.com) and look

under handheld computers.

If you want to learn more about the Windows CE operating system, check out the Microsoft site (www.microsoft.com).

Mike Wendland reports about computers and the Internet. His High Tech Talk report airs on WPC television stations across the country and his PC Talk radio show airs from 4-6 p.m.

every Saturday and Sunday on TalkRadio 1270, WXYZ in Detroit. He is the author of six books about the Internet and can be reached through his webpage at www.pemike.com.

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COUNTY NEWS

The Inaugural Ceremony to swear-in the County Commissioners was held Jan. 5.

The 25 member board has eight newly-elected members: Michelle Friedman-Appel (D-

Oak Park, Huntington Woods), Ron Colasanti (R-Highland, Milford), David N. Galloway (R-White Lake, Independence Township), Tim W. Melton (D-Auburn Hills, Pontiac), William R. Patterson (R-Oxford, Rose,

Brandon), Terry Sever (R-Farmington, Farmington Hills), and George W. Suarez (D-Madison Heights, Royal Oak).

All of the Commissioners serve a two-year term that will end Dec. 31, 2000.

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