

Portable Power Concerns Aren't New



Op-Ed: My hobby outside of life at *ECN* is collecting and restoring vintage computers. I write [a blog about the hobby](#) [1] and, for my personal collection, I focus on portable systems. Last week I interviewed [Henry Laxen](#) [2] who ran software development for a small company called Friends Amis in the early-to-mid 1980s. Friends Amis designed the [Hand Held Computer](#) [3] which was acquired by Matsushita and sold by their Panasonic and Quasar brands. This competed against the [Sharp PC-1211](#) [4], better known as the TRS-80 Pocket Computer 1. Anyway, Henry explained how they used the popular [MOS 6502](#) [5] chip inside. This was quite a challenge for a handheld computer, considering that the 6502 was seen as a primary desktop processor (Commodore Pet, Apple II) just four years earlier. In order to make the pocket computer have functional battery life, they designed a circuit that only turned on the processor when a user pressed any key. That was about 27 years ago. So lest you think otherwise, power management for portable electronics is not a new field!

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[1] <http://www.computerworld.com/blogs/koblentz>

[2] <http://www.maztravel.com/maz/album/henry.html>

[3] <http://www.old-computers.com/museum/computer.asp?c=644&st=1>

[4] <http://www.old-computers.com/museum/computer.asp?st=1&c=936>

[5] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MOS_6502