Wang 5506-2 Workstation / Display Terminal

Acquired 10/2/2013

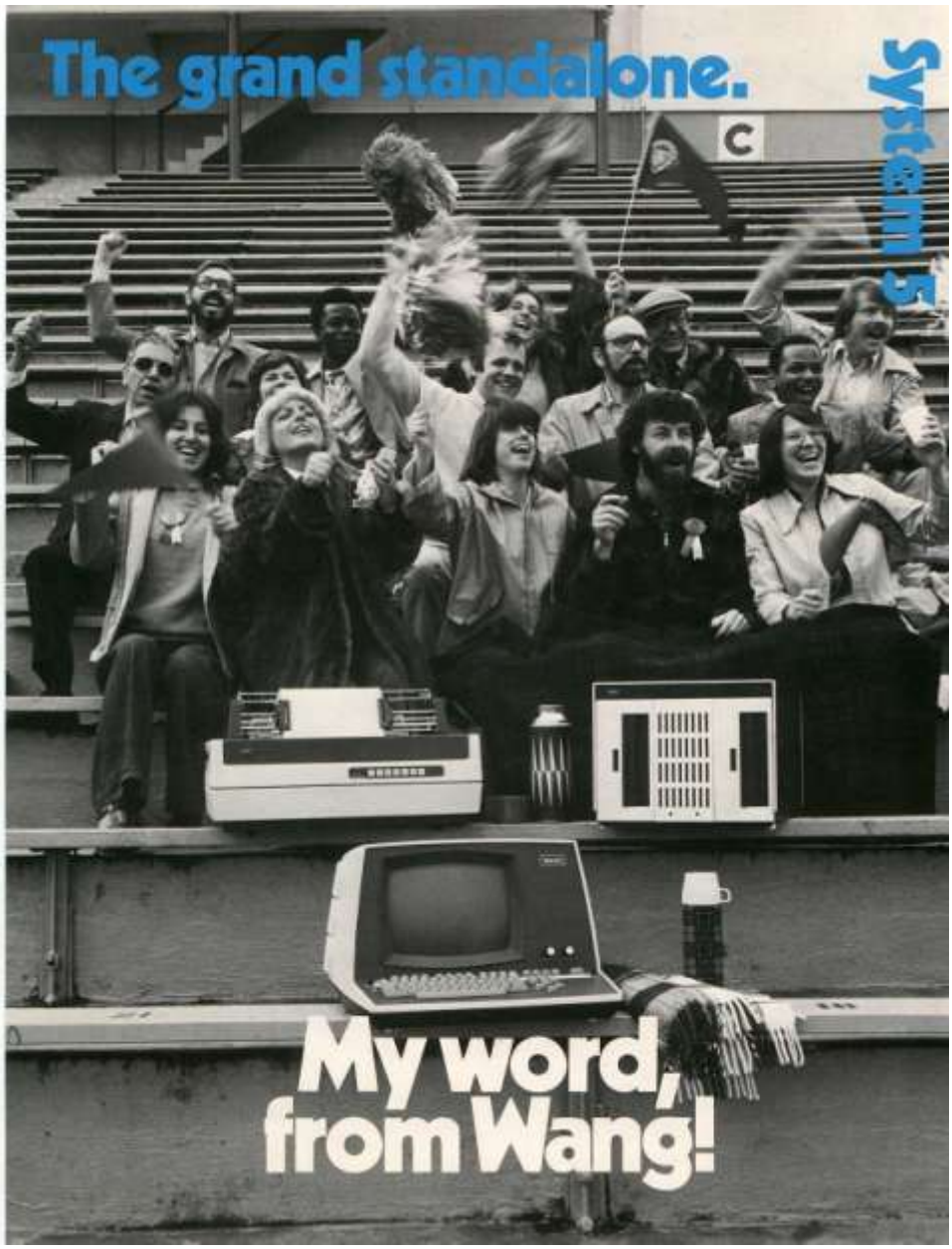
This terminal appears to have been manufactured in the middle 1970's as part of a stand-alone single-user word processing system, the Wang System 5. The terminal itself contains very little logic, beyond a parallel keyboard encoder. Video input is standard composite video fed into the terminal via a BNC connector on the rear bulkhead. Text output is via a parallel "Centronics" type connection. This is similar to the modular construction used on the Wang 2200 mini-computer.

This particular specimen has a property tag above the CRT indicating it was once owned by the Commonwealth of Kentucky, although a sticker on the lower left side of the terminal base indicates ownership by Wang Laboratories. The serial number on the upper right side of the terminal face is not legible.

The terminal appears to have been stored in a rather moist environment. There is corrosion present on both the keyboard encoder circuit and the high voltage board of the CRT. At present, the CRT lights up but the sweep generators are inoperative. There is no response to video signals introduced to the rear connector. Likewise, the keyboard encoder is inoperative.

There is very little information about the Wang System 5 on the Internet. The Internet Wayback machine has an archived copy of a dead website written by a Wang Engineer Harold Koplow at http://web.archive.org/web/20110726141200/http://www.harolds928people.org/.

A link on Koplow's page provides the following photograph from an advertisement for the System 5:



From this photograph, it would appear that the terminal was normally accompanied by a CPU with two floppy disk drives (8" or 5.25"?) and a daisy-wheel printer (possibly a Diablo HyTyper model).

The website also indicates that the group that developed the Wang System 5 was organized on September 28, 1975 and was internally known as Department 14.

The Computer History Museum in Mountain View, California has both a WPS-5 CPU and a 5506 terminal similar to the one in my collection. The photograph of the System 5 CPU more clearly shows that the floppy disk drives were of the 8" variety. A date sticker on the museum CPU may indicate that it was manufactured on June 23, 1980.

The URL for the museum CPU is http://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102688175 and the URL for the museum terminal is http://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102674803.

There is a mirror of the Bitsaver's Archive in Germany that may have some information on the WPS / OIS systems, but these appear to be for newer members of the OIS family (Circa 1985.) That URL is http://bitsavers.informatik.uni-stuttgart.de/pdf/wang/.

Additional Wang Resources on the Web:

1. http://www.wang2200.org/ -- Jim Battle's Website on the Wang 2200.
2. http://home.wxs.nl/~janvdv/wang/wangmuseum.htm -- A Wang Museum in the Netherlands
3. http://gbswang.com/ -- A South African Tribute Site.
4. http://www.digibarn.com/collections/systems/wang2200a/index.html - The DigiBarn Museum
5. http://www.gaby.de/ewang.htm -- The Wang PCS-II
6. http://www.pantsnotfound.com/products/wang -- Better get the T-Shirt!
7. http://www.ricomputermuseum.org/Home/equipment -- A large collection of Wang Systems
8. http://vs18k.dyndns.org/wang.html -- Jim Donoghue's Website (Generally Down ☹)
9. http://www.wang1200.org/ -- Jim Battles strikes again!
10. http://www.ricomputermuseum.org/Home/collections-gallery/wang-computer-gallery-2
11. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wang_Laboratories -- A wikipedia entry
12. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SAyFP_4EvI8 – A Wang commercial from 1983
13. http://www.oldcalculatormuseum.com/d-wangcustom.html - A great history of Wang