

**By Timothy Linscott**

*Managing Editor*

Technology was a topic of discussion around the office and at home this week.

“What did we do before Google?”

“How did we function before cell phones?”

“The latest high def televisions are just amazing.”

“Motion capture gaming is the wave of the future.”

“Blu-ray players bring everything to life with such clarity.”

These statements made me wonder a bit and then I started to furrow my brow much like my father would when dealing with technological advances. I began to feel like an old grump in a way with the slew of technology out there today, all saving us time and making our lives better. Really?

- “What did we do before Google?” Well, we read these things called books. You held them in your hands and they gave you answers to questions. Not a Kindle or iPad, a book. An ‘iPad’ was an apartment for people with bad grammar back in my day.

Did I really just pull out the ‘back in my day’? Sheesh, I am getting old.

- “How did we function before cell phones?”

We went to the store, forgot milk and had to turn around and go back when our significant other reminded us we forgot milk and added four more items to the list.

- “The latest high def televisions are just amazing.”

Yes, so are color televisions. We had a black and white TV for a while when I was growing up. I remember my mother telling me about how she and her sister would huddle around the radio and imagine what the characters looked like during shows like ‘Little Orphan Annie.’

My children have MP3 players, one has video capabilities on it, my wife has a phone that can search the internet, play games and do just about everything.

I had a cheap knock off of a Walkman that had a tape deck in it with giant buttons for fast forward and play. The ‘stop’ button would fall off almost immediately, so you just listened to the thing until the tape stopped or carry an ink pen with you and jam it into the hole where the ‘stop’ button was to get the tape to quit.

By the way, cassette tapes were plastic miniature ‘reel-to-reel’ recordings that replaced records. Records were black discs that spun on a turntable. A turntable was a device that automatically turned the black discs and sometimes required strategically placed pennies to balance out playing capabilities.

That last paragraph was for the younger generation, a brief history lesson. No one wants to get into 8-tracks, so I’ll skip that lesson.

- “Motion capture gaming is the wave of the future.”

I had ‘Pong.’ Oh, no, not ping-pong, that would be way too advanced for late 1970’s video games, I am talking about just ‘Pong.’

After years of playing Mattel handheld video games like basketball and football, which consisted of small red lines that you controlled around a small ruby screen, there came ‘Pong.’

This was the future, my friends, a bona fide miracle of technology. You hooked it up to your TV and it was...well, two white lines you controlled on a black screen (see the major difference between the Mattel games and ‘Pong’? Don’t worry, I don’t either).

It was like ping-pong, but on TV. My brothers and I thought it was the greatest thing ever to

take place in the history of mankind...then Atari came out.

Atari was the revolution of video games. However, it had a lofty price tag, so I spent many hours at my friend Scott Lehman's house making my eyes bleed with games like 'Bezerker,' 'Yar's Revenge,' 'Missile Command,' 'Space Invaders' and when we wanted to get athletic, we'd play sports games like 'football,' 'boxing,' 'basketball' or 'skiing.'

Nintendo would come out soon after and change the globe. Again, I made an impression in Scott's couch playing games like 'Techno Bowl' and 'Double Dragon.'

The only motion capture action found in those days was when you elbowed your friend to disrupt his play or jumped up and down frantically when King Hippo knocked you down in 'Punch-out.'

By the way, for a young man, a rite of passage in my day was spending 15 hours straight living off of Totino's pizza, 2-liters of Coke and Donnettes trying to beat 'Mike Tyson's Punch-out.' Your hands would be numb, blisters on your fingers, eyes forever damaged, slightly nauseous, but by golly, you defeated a video game's final character (who, incidentally, only recently played his own game and lost to Glass Joe).

- "Blu-ray players bring everything to life with such clarity."

So did Beta players in my day. We were the last family in North America, I am pretty sure, to own a VCR. The thing was about two feet wide by three feet long and I am pretty sure weighed close to two metric tons. Being so late to own this technology we thankfully figured out that Beta players were obsolete.

Being able to tape cartoons on a Saturday morning or movies off of primetime TV was the greatest thing ever. VCR's went the way of the dinosaur and now you can watch great programming like 'Fat Albert' on re-run, DVD or on the web.

I wax nostalgic over these technological advances but when it comes down to it, in my advancing years, I kind of prefer going back to having little technology in my life.

My kids and I played Wii (their gift from Santa this year) and it was fun, I'll admit it, but I had just as much fun playing a 'poppo' game. The game with the dice under a plastic dome, advancing pegs around a board was just as much fun as dancing around in front of a TV.

Having two million colors and high definition football games are nice, but it doesn't add to the excitement of watching a great comeback or bonding with others over the experience.

I have watched bowl games on black and white TV's and high def TV's and the experience is the same for me, the technology doesn't matter.

Spending time with friends and family is, to me, more important than owning the latest piece of technology.

I guess I am getting old fashioned and preferring the experience of it all to the gadgets.