

Lighter Side

A Hole in My Heart

You don't expect it and you certainly don't plan for it but all at once out of the blue, it happens: you suffer a loss so devastating that it puts a hole in your heart. That recently happened to me. Thank God it wasn't a person, for those losses are tragic and life-changing. It wasn't a beloved pet either; as pet lovers know, losing a pet can have a major impact on your life as well. No, in my case it was not a living thing but I did not realize how important it was until it was gone.

The day started innocently enough as I turned on Fox News, poured a glass of orange juice and put a Jimmy Dean breakfast sandwich in the microwave. I closed the door and pressed the "Start" button, something I had done many times before. It was kind of like crossing the street; you look both ways but you do not really expect to get hit by a car. In an instant, I knew something was wrong. The microwave turntable had only made about a quarter of a turn when it groaned to a stop and the inside light faded out. My first reaction was that of a typical male. I pushed the "Start" button harder a second time. The microwave never blinked; it just stared back at me with a lifeless black window. I moved quickly to the basement and I checked and reset the electrical breaker. I returned to the kitchen and, with great care, I gently pushed the "Start" button one more time. I was greeted with a flicker of light, a slight groan and then silence. It was over in a split second. I am sure it didn't suffer but it seemed obvious even to someone with no medical training that the microwave was dead. It had been a good microwave and served us well but its time was cut short in what I felt sure was the prime of its life.

Upon hearing the news, my wife suggested we call a repairman but unfortunately, when it comes to microwaves, it costs between \$100 and \$125 for someone to come to your house and tell you what you already know: it costs more to fix a microwave than it does to buy a new one. Although that might normally be true, this microwave was a combination microwave and convention oven with a specialized sensor cook panel that was supposed to cook things automatically according to the item selected. I always wanted to toss in a hamburger and punch in a name like "deer," "moose" or "alligator" just to see what might happen but my wife would never let me do it. In addition, the microwave was built into a custom kitchen that cost slightly more than a new car.

At first glance, the choice might seem simple: go out and buy a new microwave just like the dead one. That seemed like a good idea until I found out that they no longer make the model with which we had lived very happily until that dark morning.



by John Kasun

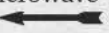
I wear big boy pants, so I accepted the fact that I would have to buy a different model but obviously one that fit the hole in my cabinets where the old microwave used to live. However, it seems that appliance designers are simply frustrated waterboard interrogators. They love to make people miserable a little at a time. To do so, they periodically change the outside dimensions of appliances so they just don't quite fit where the old ones did.

I found myself in the process of checking every appliance on the market from every manufacturer, looking for one slightly smaller or slightly bigger, in a different color or with a smaller handle or no

handle. The fact that the cabinets were built to a custom size around the old microwave and the backsplash tile, which was special ordered from Italy and would now have to be custom cut to allow for the new, larger microwave, made me realize that this was not going to be easy or cheap. My wife was already dragging out decorating magazines, picking out curtains and floor tiles, all while talking about updating the entire kitchen, which meant new everything.

I seriously considered putting the old microwave back on the wall to fill the hole and forgetting the whole problem. However, I soon found it was amazing how many times I walked over to the hole in the wall with a bowl of soup or a cup of hot chocolate mix or something else I wanted to heat up only to stand there, brokenhearted, staring at what was once a major heat-generating machine but had become as worthless as a pack of wet matches and some damp newspaper.

The longer we sought a simple solution to the problem, the more it appeared as if the only solution might be to redo the entire kitchen. If that happens, I have already decided to buy two of every appliance so when the first one fails, I will have a replacement on hand that I know will fit the new kitchen design. At the end of that time, I figure it will be my wife's next husband's problem. While that may sound expensive, it gives me at least two more chances to cope with failed appliances without ripping my kitchen apart again.

In trying to apply some logic to the problem, I realized I would also need to buy a lifetime supply of Jimmy Dean breakfast sandwiches in case they stop making them. That means I will need to get a bigger freezer to store them in. I wonder if that means I will need to buy a second freezer as a backup. I knew I should have tried harder to save my original microwave. I can see the headline in the local newspaper now: "Desperate Man Electrocuted While Giving Microwave CPR." 

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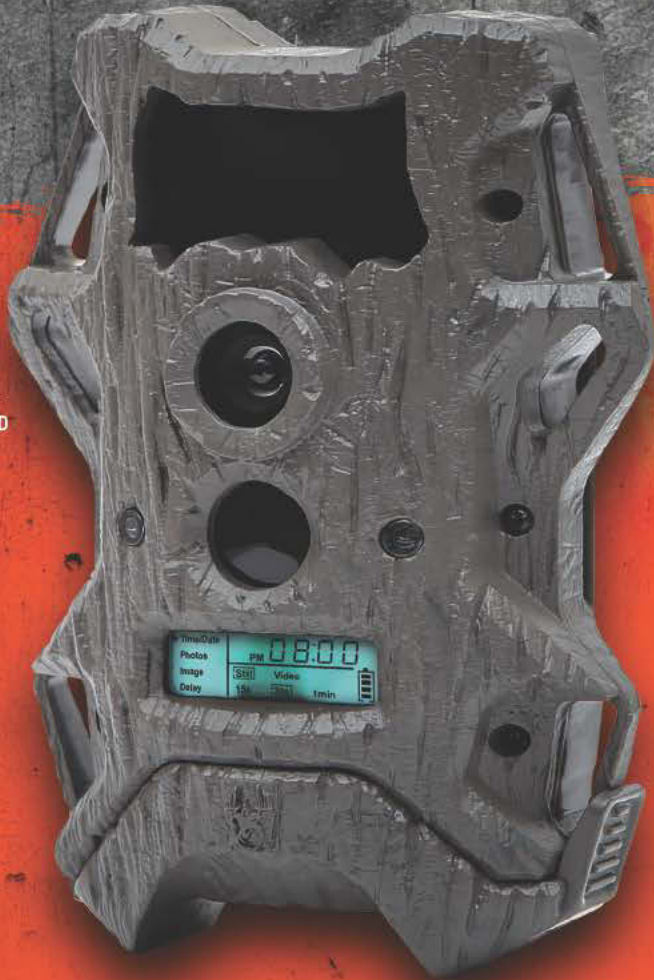
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