



Lighter Side

By John Kasun

Getting Off the Technology Train

While I am officially a card-carrying member, in good standing, of the senior citizen demographic, I have kept up with most of the advances in technology. For the purpose of full disclosure, please note that I said “kept up with” but I did not say “understand.” All of my financial records are on the computer and when it comes time to pay a bill, I just hit a button, sit back and listen to the printer hum as it spits out the completed checks and return envelope. I can arm or disarm my home security system or summon the police or fire department with the push of a button. The remote on my truck’s key fob has a button that allows me to beep the horn from a distance. That is a great feature when I am dragging a deer out of the woods after dark and am not sure where I am or where my truck is parked.

The console holding my Smart TV in our family room has something called a Roku unit that I do not understand but my neighbor convinced my wife we needed. I understand it magically picks up streaming video from my router, which is another device that I own but do not necessarily comprehend. In turn, this Roku device allows me to watch anything from anywhere, most of which is not worth watching and once a month, the TV cable company comes to my house in an armored car with two armed guards for payment or my firstborn child and dog.

This past Christmas season, I even added a multiple-station remote-controlled station, resembling a control panel from a fighter jet, that allowed me to monitor all the holiday decorations, inside and outside, from one central location.

Some people might consider me a tech-savvy senior citizen but the truth is I just have the high-tech T-shirt and ball hat; I have no idea what is actually happening. I just push the buttons. Nothing could have made my technical shortcomings more obvious than last week, when my wife thought it would be a good idea to get one of those doorbells advertised on TV that allow you to see and talk directly with the guy intending to rob your house by simply using your phone. Now, for further clarity, my wife has a “smartphone.” I have a flip phone, which is a collector’s item that I only carry when hunting in case I fall out of a tree.

According to the doorbell advertisement, it is a simple installation. In a few minutes, you can view, talk with and personally get to know the people stealing packages from your front porch. As with everything in life, I soon learned it wasn’t as simple as advertised. First of all, these doorbells do not come in sets. After buying one for the front door, I found out I also needed one for the back door. To make matters worse, I needed two different door chimes

as well. I guess these bells were designed for people who live in apartments in New York, where they only have one door. So back to the store we went to buy a second unit when we discovered that only one worked. It seemed the second unit lit up, flashed a blue circle of light and made a lot of really cool noises but would not transmit a signal inside the house. The manufacturer told us that we needed to upgrade our router to a more powerful unit. Also, we quickly learned that the exterior doorbell/video unit, which was wireless, was powered by a single battery. It seems as if every time someone pushed the button, the doorbell ate the battery and sent a message to my phone that it needed a new battery. Someone could ring the doorbell and if the battery were low, I would have to go outside and change the battery so I could go back inside and answer the door over my phone. If I had to do that, why not just talk to the person while I was outside? The other solution might be to store extra batteries outside, with a note telling the people ringing the doorbell that if there was no answer, they should change the battery and try again. Of course, it makes sense that the person stealing my packages might also steal my box of batteries.

I was really hoping these new magic doorbells would work because I was considering adding them to my tree-stands and trail cameras. That way I could speak directly to the thief who was stealing my personal property. The problem is, as it dawned on me, that they would probably also steal the doorbell.

However, the straw that broke the back of my technology camel was when I learned that I might also have to upgrade my phone to ensure compatibility with the new doorbell, which still was not working properly. In addition, that also meant that I had to have a phone with me all the time in case the doorbell rang and that is not happening. Suddenly it dawned on me that I had reached my stop on the technology train and I was getting off.

I gently broke the news to my wife that we would not be in Disney World answering our doorbell. Taking a step backward was not only simpler but a lot cheaper. As a matter of fact, I am in the process of replacing my original doorbell with a sign that says “Knock.” That has worked for years and no batteries are required.

John Kasun writes his column from his home in Duncansville, Pennsylvania, where he has decided to spend his remaining days actually living and not checking his phone to see who is at the front door or, worse, changing batteries.



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