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# I love technology (kind of)

C. Douglas Phillips, MD, FACR

*"Technology is, of course, a double-edged sword. Fire can cook our food but also burn us."*

—Jason Silva

We had some friends visit us at the Jersey shore a while back, and while we were sitting at a nice seaside café, having a drink and watching the waves break, their 18-month-old was playing with their cell phone. That might not seem all that odd, but on further observation, it took my breath away:

An 18-month-old—a *toddler*—was swiping through videos, finding the ones she wanted to watch, and starting them! After watching a video through and laughing, she swiped through to the next one. Wow. I've just figured out a lot of that stuff myself, and here was a toddler already smart enough to use a smart-phone. At her age I was playing with blocks.

It got me thinking about where our technology is, where we are likely headed, and what it is going to mean. Conversely, I also started thinking about the old days. Perhaps I'm feeling old again, or maybe just getting realistic about life, and wondering about where our field will go, but it is reasonable to think about the past from time to time.

We already are in the midst of training a generation of colleagues who have never used a typewriter (well, except for the hipsters, who have for some unknown reason embraced them). They have never used a rotary phone. They see one on an old TV show, or in a period movie, and they ask you, "Hey, did you ever use one of those?"

Well, yes, I did.

So, imagine how old you feel, how creaky and decrepit you imagine yourself, when you relate your best roller scope/alternator story. Generation gap. Remember when an alternator would jump a panel? Life came to a halt. Perhaps some daring soul would stick their arm down between the panels to grasp an emergent study you needed, but, otherwise,

it was downtime of the highest order. Get a coffee. Read a book. Wait for the engineers to come and fix it.

My favorite was when you were able to keep the roller scope functioning, but it would bang incessantly as the panels moved. It became a disaster about to happen. You knew at some point the thing was going to jam, but you took some kind of demented pleasure in continuing to use it, letting it bang away. The best was when clinicians were in the room and you looked like a daredevil. They would move away, wondering when the thing was going to seize up, or maybe even blow up.

Then there was the hot light. Have you ever described a hot light to one of the juniors? Man, that is one tough concept to get across. Kind of a window/level adjust for a prior era. The hot light had to have an amazing bulb in it — kind of like a supernova bulb. A good one was *way* too bright to look at. One of my older colleagues would take out bulbs with too little wattage to be effective and throw them in the trash: "Bring us a proper bulb for this, please?"

This, of course, was a really great idea for people who rely on their eyes. "Here, look at this film, and take care you don't blind yourself." If you didn't have the film well situated over the hot light before you hit the switch, you weren't much good for the next hour or so.

And, the heat they generated was freakishly unbelievable. Potential major hazard here — getting the film too close could melt it, or even start a fire. No better way to show you're a rookie than melting a valuable (and one-of-a-kind) radiograph. That impresses the techs, for sure. "Yeah, Dr. Phillips melted the lateral swimmer's view on that trauma. You'll have to repeat it."

We all bitch and scream about our current technology. Yeah, yeah, I know. I do it, too. It has quirks and limitations, no doubt, but it also has removed us from a whole host of other things that weren't necessarily our friends.

Keep doing that good work. Mahalo.