

On the money, 41 years ago

Not long ago, The Sidekick and I went to an auction sale.

I attend auction sales with a certain amount of trepidation when taking The Sidekick along— many people think I'm a romantic 'cuz I hold her hand as we walk around at the sale.

It's really to prevent her from bidding.

At times, I have an uncontrollable urge to tie her wrists to her belt so she can't bid. But fearing people might give me strange looks if I did, I took my chances at this particular sale, turning her loose on the unsuspecting auctioneer.

One of the items she bid on (and subsequently bought) was a stack of old magazines from the early 1960s.

The 1963 *Eaton's Spring and Summer* catalogue (with a Jackie Kennedy look-alike on the cover) was the real prize, but a stack of others came along with it. For \$9, she was the proud owner of a bunch of *Life*, *Look* and other news magazines from the 1960s, as well as the coveted *Eaton's* catalogue, of course.

(I admit, I smiled as I thumbed through the catalogue. Geez, I could still recall some of those models on the lingerie pages.)

When she had time to peruse what she'd bought, she came across the June 10, 1966 issue of *Life*, with a full page ad from Bell Telephone.

I could relate to that date, the day before my 15th birthday. Remembering this was 1966, 41 years ago, the Bell ad told of the company's plans for the future, saying:

"Touch tone push buttons are swift servants of the modern hand. With them you place calls faster and someday will 'input' instructions into bank and store computers to render and pay bills, transfer money, charge purchases, verify credit and thus gain greater command of personal time and energy. Still other ways they can free you of daily drudgery are being explored."

As I read the words, I was amazed at how well the ad had nailed it. More than four

Ted Brown



decades later, Bell's prophecy was uncannily accurate, right on the money so to speak.

We can access our banks with telephones, we can connect to the business world, we can do all the things that the advertisement said we would be able to do— and more.

When published, the average reader would have dismissed it as a glib attempt at selling 'pie in the sky'. Most of us would have rolled our eyes, said, "Oh sure," and let it go at that.

But it made me think for a bit.

How much more did they know about the future of communications back then, yet were simply not about to venture so far out on that public relations limb to say so?

By the same token, what are the prophecies that they'd make today? I wonder if they'd sound as futuristic as the one from June 10, 1966.

Whatever the case, I think we will never cease to be in awe of the capabilities of technology, be it from 1966 or 2007.

So long as there are genius minds laying awake at night, scratching their heads to come up with another time-saving program or piece of equipment, we ordinary folks will stand in awe of them.

Personally, I'm just hoping for one piece of technology. I want someone to develop a device that automatically locks one's wrists to their belt, when in the vicinity of an auctioneer sounding off and taking bids.

I figure when it's developed, I'll be able to attend the next auction sale in relative peace.

(Ted Brown can be reached at tbrown@independentfreepress.com)

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