

Sellafonaphobia

About a year-and-a-half ago I bought this cool, little black cell phone. It had a camera feature that would make my life easier, or so I thought. Now I would no longer be burdened with a gargantuan press camera and an assortment of obscenely long lenses that Sherpas, elephants and bellhops would charge extra for if they had to carry my camera bag up a flight of stairs.

Everything was fine until I took the first picture and sent it to my boss via telephone. Another convenient feature that allowed me to avoid going to the office where I might have to actually work. Anyway, my digital photograph of the town council made their heads look like a group of fur balls after an insane cat attacked them in the middle of a seizure. The boss was less than pleased.

The cool little phone was allegedly the high-tech item of the day when I bought it, or so the salesperson told me. Apparently, the technology has improved considerably since the dark ages of 18 months ago, if salespeople are to be believed.

I went into the cell phone store to have the battery checked because it wasn't holding its charge. As soon as I pulled the phone out of my pocket the young man behind the counter gave it a wide-eyed stare and called the other clerks over to see.

"Wow! Look at this," the young man who introduced himself as Ernie, said. "A Schmooscam Image-recker 101 - I haven't seen one of those since I started in the business."

I didn't even know that was the brand and model I owned. You'd think I had brought in a prototype of the original phone invented by Alexander Graham Bell himself.

"Young man, that phone isn't even two years old," I said defensively.

"Au contraire," Ernie replied. "That phone is at least four years old. You just purchased a brand new, old cell phone, 18 months ago."

Then he entered the cell phone serial number into a computer and my entire history with the phone popped up on the screen.

"Let's see - you bought this close-out el cheapo model in March of 2005," Ernie said. "This thing was obsolete before you bought it. They haven't made parts for it for



You can't beat a system you can't understand

By Sam Bari

years. It can't be repaired and new batteries are not available."

Then he continued to read that the phone had Bluetooth capabilities as well as text messaging, web and e-mail capabilities, and voice dialing as well as video games, a calculator, calendar, and an appointment scheduler — none of which I used. Ernie told me that my phone could talk to my computer and I could even go shopping on it. I must admit, it sounded amazing.

"Dude, why did you buy a phone with all those features that you never use?" Ernie asked. Before I had a chance to answer, he said, "Features or not, that phone is so old, I'm surprised you can pick up a signal. You need a new phone."

I had to confess, I didn't know how to use most of the features he was talking about and I didn't feel as if I missed out on much. I didn't even know I had them. They just came with the phone. It wasn't a matter of choice.

I don't believe the most basic cell phone on the market allows the user to just make telephone calls. Apparently, it wouldn't be worth manufacturing because it would probably sell for under \$10. With all the tricked out phones on the market, I doubt many people would buy one anyway. I'm guessing. Like most of us, I don't really know.

It was hard to accept that my entire relationship with my cell phone was available for anyone in the gigantic company to see, including my usage, who I called, how often, and when.

I resisted the sale. Ernie even offered to give me lessons on how to use all the features on a new phone. In the end — Ernie won. He sold me a new phone that ended up costing \$39. I can now purchase and listen to music, send text mes-

sages, and search the web all at the same time if I want. And, it has a 2-mega pixel camera and camcorder, which is not bad quality if the picture isn't enlarged too much.

This phone even has GPS capabilities just in case I get lost. It has twice as many features as my old phone and cost less. But, that's not why I bought it. All of the features on this phone are available on my laptop computer and I don't have to strain my eyes if I choose to use them.

I bought the phone because it's only .3 of an inch thick and weighs less than 2.5 ounces. It fits in my shirt pocket and I don't notice it's there. I would have paid \$39 for that feature alone.

I can't help but wonder how people find the time to take advantage of all the features and capabilities of their cell phones. And I have no idea why anyone would want to watch an entire movie on a three-inch screen or pound out a text message on a miniature keypad when they can just call and leave a voice message. Complex, costly cell phones are definitely part of that system I just can't understand.



The right tool for the job

Firefighter Keith Godena uses the tools at hand to clean the gutters at the fire station on Monday.

Photo by Donna Drago

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ELLEN WINSOR

Independent for Town Council



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