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HAPPY 4TH OF JULY

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Googlemaniacs

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mation gathering.

I have witnessed both eras. I remember the euphoric experience of being immersed in a good book and swimming through a sea of words that stimulated my imagination and took me on a voyage to a new and exciting reality.

A trip through the virtual world of the Internet is like visiting Washington D. C. with a tour guide and seeing the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, and the National Mall all in a two-day weekend. I have spent a week in the Smithsonian and never saw all of it. Consider the difference between walking across the country and flying over it in a jet plane that has broken the sound barrier.

I know a young family that recently selected a house with just one visit to the property. They then jumped on the Internet and took a virtual tour of the neighborhood to find all that it had to offer. They accessed public records and learned about their neighbors. Names, ages, how many were in the family, and in

many cases what the principle money maker did for a living was readily available with a few strokes of a keypad.

What happened to the practice of visiting the neighborhood and talking to the residents, shopkeepers, and school teachers? When I was a boy, the anticipation of meeting new friends and exploring the community on my bike kept me awake at nights. Moving to a new neighborhood was an adventure that presented a thousand surprises and as many rewards. The Internet has taken away the mystery and romance of the unknown.

Those who have been addicted to the Internet for so long that they have contracted *cyberspace-lyitis* have probably learned more "about" life and all the world has to offer than the rest of us. However, they are not aware that they are denying themselves the joys of the life experience. Fortunately, life does not go by at the speed of thought. I still like to savor it for all its worth.

No matter how much we use the Internet, it will never take the place of the realities of a real world. Cyberspace is just another part of that system we can't understand.

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