

Who Remembers....Eight (almost) Forgotten Technologies?

The old adage “Time flies!” becomes increasingly louder as we get older. What seems like a tired cliché begins to gain momentum and demands attention. Seems like last year I was changing my daughter’s diapers and all of a sudden I am having conversation about world affairs, geography, and DNA with my 13 year old daughter.

How did that happen?!

It’s a great reminder that often we go through our day on a sort of auto-pilot. Days merge into days, weeks become a blur and years pass in fast forward. Recalling nostalgia is a fantastic way to take a bit back from the speeding progress of time. A rewind or pause.

There is something odd about the entire process. These things we recall are often not even things we were fond of when they were prevalent. In fact, we may even dislike or despise them – yet, conjuring them evokes a smile or chuckle.

Here are five “technologies” or gadgets that we’ve likely forgotten. However, at their mere mention we declare “OH YEAH!!” Thus they are “(almost)” forgotten. Let’s have a little fun!

The Payphone



*"Would like to
accept these
charges?"*

One day while driving my daughter asked me about what things were like when I was a kid. During the discussion I told her about the phone booth and payphones. I mentioned that if your car broke down, you would have to walk about and find a payphone, then pay 10 cents or make a "collect call." She genuinely thought I was pulling her leg. "Why would you do that instead of use your cell phone?" she asked. Every once in a while, I will come across a payphone stall (not a full fledged booth with the collapsing door) and will point it out so she can see that it's not a practical joke. Even funnier is when I brought out an old phone from the attic, complete with spiral cord all tangled up. "Why would you need a chord on a phone?"

I remember a local call costing 10 cents, then eventually going up to a quarter before becoming obsolete. Does anyone remember it costing less than a dime?

School Nostalgia

In the day of hollow plastic pencils with replaceable lead, it's becoming less common to come across the genuine article. A yellow, No. 2 pencil (NOT wax) with a red rubber butt. When the pencil became dull, you would raise your hand (remember

that?!) and ask to use the pencil sharpener.

The pencil sharpener would be a sturdy metal contraption that was bolted down onto the most solid object in the classroom. You would select the right size opening for your pencil, stick it in, and turn the crank with old-fashioned elbow grease.

There was the heavy and dangerous paper-cutter with it's chopping blade. Nowadays, you would need 10 permits, a license, 3 inspections and a government agency bribe to have one in a classroom. Of course, only in New Bedford.

There giant rubber erasers and the brown paper bags to make as book covers, that were scribbled on and decorated with stickers. Also the small plastic chairs, that every boy learned early on – do NOT attempt a cheek sneak with one of these cheers. Instead of “silent and deadly,” you’ll get “louder and not so prouder.”



611 if you don't like this article.

Wired remote control

In a day and age when everything is wireless, it's easy to forget when everything was physically connected and wireless wasn't so commonplace. The wire for the television remote resembled the telephone wire. Tripping over the wire while someone was fumbling with the remote became a seeming past-time for many of us. The great thing about it? It never

disappeared into the black hole that remotes (and guitar picks and socks) seem to disappear into. You never had to turn the couch upside down, tossing cushions willy-nilly in an attempt to find it. You just needed to follow the yellow-brick cord.

8-Tracks, Walkman & Albums

Today we have digital music that streams. Rewind, fast forward and skip to a favorite track in a second flat. Hop from artist to artist at the click of a button. Hundreds and thousands of songs at an instant reach. However, for many of us it was a matter of bulky media or guesswork. 8-tracks were just phasing out for me, so it was the album and the cassette tape. Wanted to skip to a favorite song? Put in the right side of the cassette, then fast forward or rewind then play and hope you were close. Rinse and repeat. Maybe after 45 seconds you'd be ready to enjoy your song.

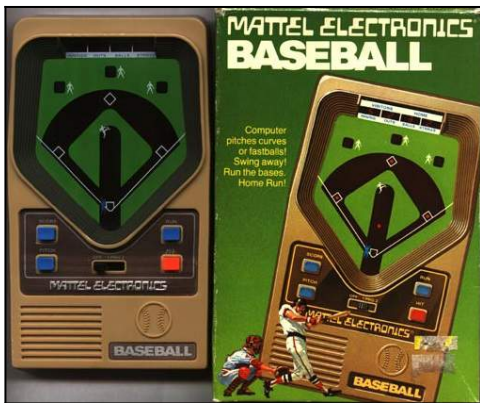
Albums were easier because you could site the tracks. Just do a count and drop the needle. However, albums could be ruined with a scratch and often played with a bit of background static or white noise. I know some actually enjoy that aspect of albums.

Pager or Beeper

Nowadays, teenagers – perhaps even younger – have the latest and greatest iPhone for \$400 and up. However, “back in the day” if you were cool you had a pager clipped to your belt. Pull out your phone, text your kids or grand-kids and tell them “14” and “17_31707_1” or “123.” Tell them how you would tell your girlfriend or boyfriend “45” and “607.” Sure, they will probably tell you how uncool and unhip you are, but at least you'll have a laugh.

Floppy Disks

While these days Terabyte and Petrabyte are tossed around, kilobyte was “it” at one time. The media of the day were Floppy Disks, which could hold a whopping 175kb of data when they first arrived for the public in 1972. Storing a large image would have been laughable, let alone vast libraries. Music files didn’t even exist, so we won’t even go there. You could store some simple text files, or small programs using the BASIC language. Apparently the computing community still thinks fondly of these as even today the floppy disk icon is used to download files.



The original gameboy!

Mattel Handheld Games

Perhaps my favorite item on this list. Mattel handheld games were the original “Gameboys,” albeit you could only play one game as these were not run by cartridges. These games were perfect for boring waits at the doctor’s or dentist’s offices, vacations on the toilet, and for when you were grounded and banished to your bedroom for hours. All the major sports were represented: basketball, baseball, soccer, football and hockey. However, there Battlestar Galactica, Formula Racer, Bowling and Armor Battle were popular favorites – which you could always try by swapping a game with a good friend for a week or two. In all there were sixty handheld games to choose from.

Drive-In Theater

I think there is a statute of limitations and that it has expired. You can confess now without penalty. If you hid in the back seat under a blanket, in the trunk or back of a van to “gip” the entrance fee to get into the drive-in, raise your hand. I have fond memories of running around the lot freely, utilizing the playground, and sitting on the hood of the car. There was a genuine intermission. Anyone remember intermissions?! The movie would stop, everyone would race to the concession stand and resupply. You would typically have 10 minutes if I recall correctly.

The Fairhaven drive-in was the one I went to the most. I wish they would bring it back, I would certainly go! I’m sure I’m not alone. However, I won’t hold my breath. If you would like to take a stroll down memory lane, there still exist drive-in theaters within driving distance. There are theaters in Leicester, Mendon, Wellfleet, and North Smithfield, Rhode Island.

What were your memories like from this list? What gadgets or technologies do you miss the most?
