

A STEP BACK IN TIME
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I remember as a child growing up on the farm, we had a phone that hung on the wall that we would crank when we wanted to use it. Being out in the country, we were on a party line, so we had to listen closely to the ringing. It would ring a short ring or a long combination. Each party had a different ring because it would also ring in each home that was on that line. If I remember right, our ring was one long and two shorts. Of course you would also have a few nosey neighbors that would pick up after you had answered, so they could listen in on your conversation. When the phone rang our designated number of rings, we'd run to the phone to answer it, and if the caller was long distance, and they needed to speak to someone else, that person was expected to do double time getting to the phone. "Time was money," and a long distance phone call was not considered cheap. Lots of times my brothers and I would be out in the barn when mom would call us from the porch that we were wanted on the phone, and if she said it was long distance, that meant you had better come running from the barn to the phone, and when you got there you were always out of breath, and could hardly speak.

Back when I was a teenager, I bought a 1949 Studebaker Champion four-door. One night my buddy and I had gone to see a movie, and when we came out a couple girls stood at the curb waiting for their ride home, but it never showed up. We offered to take them home, not even knowing where they lived.

They took us up on our offer, and directed us to turn left here, next turn right, now right again, now take a left, this went on for some time. When we reached their home, I had no idea where we were. However, my buddy said he did! On our return trip back home we drove and drove. I started noticing the lay of the land had changed and it was flat as a pool table. I told my buddy that I thought we must be in Ohio. We finally came out to a main road, and I was right, we'd been heading south, not north. But at least now I knew how to get back home. The problem was going to be finding a gas station that was still open, as we were getting low on fuel. By the time we got back to where we started, all the gas stations had closed, and the only 24-hour gas station was in the next town. It was a good thing that Studebaker got good gas mileage because we'd been on empty for some time.

We made it to the 24-hour place of business and refueled. My next problem was, it now past my curfew! So I used a pay phone to call my mother to tell her that I would be home soon, only there was no answer! Remember, this was before answering machines.

I took my buddy home and went straight home to bed. The following morning my mother said that I was grounded! I asked her why? She said that she'd been up late worried half sick that something bad had happened to me. I told her then she should have answered the phone while she was up so late worrying about me. She didn't believe me when I told her that I tried calling her. This was back when we still had switchboard operators, so I told her to call the operator and ask her. Yep, good old Mrs. Green remembered me calling and she got me off the hook.

Today, everyone has cell phones, and it seems like anywhere you go there is always someone

talking on their phone. It doesn't matter if they are driving or out for a walk, you still see them using their cell phone. More than once I've been in a store and have heard someone talking and thought they were talking to me, only to find out that they were on their phone.

When I first started to drive, you could buy a gallon of gas for less than a quarter. Sometimes my buddies, and I would chip in with our spare change to buy gas so we could go cruising around. When we pooled our money, it didn't matter if you came up with odd cents. We'd pulled into a filling station and tell the gas station attendant how much gas we wanted and he'd pump in that exact amount.

Can you believe air was free back then! Today when you go to a gas station and pull up to get air in your tires, you better have lots of change because most places now charge you for air.

Guess what else was free? "Water!" Back in those days, you never heard of paying for water! Today, I couldn't begin to try and figure out what most consumers spend in a year for drinking water, and who knows where some of it comes from. I have to admit that I'm guilty of being included in this trend. Go figure!

Even used cars were dirt-cheap back then. Matter of fact, you could buy a nice four-year-old car in the mid-fifties for less than you would pay for a yard of dirt today.

A few of the cars I had as a teenager, I actually drove to the junkyard when I was through with them and sold them for more than I had paid to begin with. Two of the cars I junked were Ford flathead V8s that over heated and cracked the engine blocks. The third car I junked was a Hudson because a tire blew out and it had no jack or spare. To buy a jack and another tire and wheel was going to cost me more than I had paid for the car. I guess this is one of the reasons why I went through so many cars as a youngster!

As I sit here writing this on the computer, I recall as a kid you either wrote by long hand or, if you were lucky, you might have a manual typewriter.