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The good old days, were they really that good?

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Were they really good old days? The other day when my grandchildren came to visit they, fortunately, were being punished and none of them had their iPhones, iPads, or tablets with them.

This allowed for something very unusual to take place at a Sochin family gathering. We talked! I always love telling my grandchildren what things were like when I was their age. I start by telling them how after dinner we would all gather around the great big mahogany box called a radio and listen to *The Lone Ranger*, *The Shadow*, *Date With Judy*, and whatever else was available at the time.

Of course we had to conjure up fantastic images of what was actually going on. Frankly, my images were better than many of the things I see on television today. Unfortunately my father later took me to a radio studio in New York City to watch a production of *The Sheriff Show*.

After watching the actors and actresses talking into a microphone, scripts in hand, and watching the sound effects person knocking on a door, making clickety clop sounds with a pair of shoes, etc., I was never able to use my imagination to listen to a radio show again.

My mother and father were fortunate enough to attend the 1939 World's Fair in New York. They came back all excited about watching a little box with a window in it and seeing what was actually taking place in another room. It was called television.

Of course this was something beyond all of our dreams but I would look at my radio dial at home and try to imagine what it might be like to actually look into a window and see what was going on in another part of the world.

Shortly thereafter one of our neighbors won a television set at a bingo parlor and brought it home so that all of the kids in the neighborhood could actually watch television. It was a seven-inch TV and the only program for us to watch was *Rin Tin Tin*, a talented German shepherd that was able to save lives and do all kinds of incredible things for a dog.

It wasn't long after that my older brother earned enough money to buy a TV for the Sochin family. It was a huge 10-inch screen made by a company called Tele King. There weren't many things to watch at this time so we would rush home from school, turn on the TV and watch test patterns until *Kukla Fran and Ollie* came on.

There were two channels available at the time and it



Remember these?

required getting up, changing the channel and moving the rabbit ears antenna to pick up either one.

The most exciting thing at night was the wrestling matches. Any kid alive in that era could name most of the wrestlers of the day. Frank Sexton was the champion, the Swedish and French Angels were the better wrestlers available at that time, and no one could forget Ivan Rasputin or Argentina Rocca and their incredible moves inside the ring.

As time progressed television improved with the addition of "Mr. Television," Milton Berle. We loved him! Most of us from that generation can still sing the Texaco song:

Oh we're the men from Texaco; we work from Maine to Mexico; there is nothing like this Texaco of ours.

As we became more affluent we purchased a large magnifying glass filled with mineral oil that would allow us to see our 10-inch set blown up to 16 inches. Of course, due to the curvature of the screen you had to line up almost dead center in the room to take advantage of the magnification. This meant that only two or three people could comfortably watch our new giant screen at the same time.

Everyone was on a first name basis with the local TV repairman. You had better be. Of course some of us would take all the tubes out of the set and go to the nearest drugstore where they had a tube tester so we could make our own repairs. If we were lucky it was a burned out tube causing the problem.

Radio wasn't totally dead yet. I remember my older

brother buying me my first portable radio. It was an Emerson and weighed probably 10 or 15 pounds. It required two large batteries; one "B" battery for the main power and in another "A" battery to light the filaments in the many tubes inside, but who cared; we were able to carry this huge box to the beach and listen to a baseball game or Joe Louis fighting Billy Conn without having to be at home near an electrical outlet. What would they think of next?

Some years later I was able to buy a transistor radio made by Raytheon and actually carry it in my pocket. Just imagine. I love telling these stories to not only my grandkids, but kids that I speak to in the many schools that I visit. I know that it is hard for them to envision a bunch of people sitting around listening to a radio or watching a black and white TV show on a seven-inch screen but I doubt that they will ever have the excitement in their life that we had as each of these new developments became available.

Automobiles were becoming more sophisticated also at this time. One of the things you needed to do to pass your driving exam was learn all of the hand signals for making a turn. Who would have dreamed that there would be a little switch on the steering wheel that would flash lights on either side of the car to accomplish the same thing? Of course in Miami-Dade County no one uses them anyway, but I still find them fascinating.

My first car had what was considered a major development in automotive science. It was a 1947 Chrysler with fluid drive. It had a clutch and a gear shift but it allowed you to shift only one time into second gear and then by taking your foot off the gas and letting the car coast it would shift into third gear with a loud clunk. Imagine not having to press the clutch again to shift into drive.

In Massachusetts at that time you would get either a shift license or an automatic transmission license. Because my car actually had a gearshift and a clutch I had to pass the test driving a full gear shift automobile. It was scary but I finally passed the exam.

I hope you who are reading this article are finding it as fascinating as my grandchildren did. I tell them these stories with one purpose in mind, that someday they will be telling their children or grandchildren how tough it was having to actually use their iPhone and push a button to see and hear another person. I am sure by that time telepathic messages between individuals will be somewhat common, so watch what you are thinking.

More futuristic ideas from Ernie are available at <www.sochin.com>.