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## *Technology Autobiography*

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It was bright red with awkward black knobs on it. Cords swirled like copperheads out of the back of the television. I stared at the device, then at the screen, confused by the lime green circle bouncing back and forth between two lines. My dad and his buddies seemed to control the lines. I just stared wondering where my Scooby Doo had gone. My dad finally let me move the knob around. The control didn't interest me. I was 5. It was Pong.

Grandma Bernie's house. A brown plastic contraption atop the television. Little levers controlled the channels. Thirty of them! Grandma told me about this singer named Boy George. She said he was "fabulous!" And this crazy woman named Cyndi Lauper who gram said was "so unusual!" I pushed the levers to 27 and it appeared. Colors, music, people moving in and out of the screen, odd clothing, big hair. The fast paced movement mesmerized me. I was 7. It was MTV.



An ADAM computer was brought to our house. I thought they named it after my brother, but it looked nothing like him. It was brown and bulky, with what looked like a tape player (but mom told me that I **WAS NOT** to put my Cyndi Lauper tape in it). Instead there was a Donkey Kong tape I could use. I would pull the keypad-

joystick off of the keyboard and move Mario up and down through ladders and flying barrels, trying to save the princess. While mom only let me watch one hour of TV per day, computer time wasn't restricted. I also began to learn how to type and how to write something called BASIC. I would put all these weird symbols onto the screen, hit a button, and they would turn into shapes. I made a rocket ship and a house. It only entertained me for awhile and I soon lost interest. I was 8, it was my family's first home computer.



For some reason, technology after age 8 become a blur. Perhaps things were happening so quickly that I didn't have time to be mesmerized by them. My Grandma Myrtle was always on the cutting edge of new technologies, and soon after she would pick up on



something, it seemed that many people I knew would have these gadgets as well. Answering machines. VCRs. Microwaves. Portable phones. Electronic keyboards. I do remember ADAM going out of business and my parents buying an IBM computer. I don't think I used it too much except for some games. Although around this time my brother got a Nintendo, which basically made computer games look really archaic. Adam and I would spend hours playing Mario Brothers, Duck Hunt, Double-Dribble and The Legend of Zelda. It was sadly addictive, and my mom soon began trying to get us to "go outside and play." Something about those moving images though, it just sucked us in.

Keeping up with technology was something my family did early on. We had a home computer before most of my friends. After Grandma got a answering machine and VCR, so did we. However, once the 80s were over, things began to change. Technology moved so fast that unless you had a lot of money or lived in a place where these technologies were available, it was impossible to keep up. It kind of felt that my family lost interest in new technologies. We had our fill.

Even though I went to high school between 1990-1994, I still learned to type on a typewriter and never even heard of the capabilities of computers. Our district was very small and very poor. We did have some computers at school, mostly Commodore 64s. In 10<sup>th</sup> grade I had a class where we began to learn to type on the computer. It was a simple text based program, and all we would do is type notes to each other. I was on the yearbook staff in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and while I heard of other schools doing things on a computer, we still did everything by hand. I remember drawing layouts, putting blue pencils on photos to crop them, typing the text; I didn't know any different so I didn't feel like I was missing something.

Then came college. 1994. I moved 550 miles away to Ann Arbor, MI and was quickly blown way by everything I had missed. Students were using something called e-mail, surfing the internet, manipulating images in photoshop, I was totally floored and felt completely out of place. Thanks to some roommates, I began to catch up.

I was never scared of new technologies, I just wanted to know what everyone else knew, I didn't want to look inferior. This inferiority complex still affects my relationship with technology. I want to know things, I want to be able to at least understand things. Yet I find that I am still very resistant to many technologies that "city-folk" use. Cellular phones, beepers, and palm pilots have a huge stigma in my family, and if I ever got one I'd be embarrassed to admit it. These are seen as "unnecessary gadgets" and "silly status symbols" in my family and amongst my hometown friends. For some reason in my small hometown, one-upping each other is really looked down upon (I'm still scared to tell people I'm in grad school because I don't want them to think that I think I'm better than them), so technology has kind of stalled out at the VCR/microwave/old PC phase.

I've reached the point where I want to know what's going on, but I don't necessarily want to publicly be a part of it. On the other hand, Grandma Myrtle, at age 80, still stays on top of technology. She's been teaching her friends how to use computers. She seems to have no qualms with going public with her technology literacy. Maybe I could learn something from her.