

## THE TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION

by David Strange, M. D.

A sudden change always gets your attention, but when things change gradually, it sneaks up on you, and sometimes when you realize how different the world was, not so long ago, it's almost unbelievable.

I remember being startled when my Dad said he had never seen a shopping mall until after the War, until I reflected that the whole development of suburbia was a post-war phenomenon, requiring the near-universal ownership of automobiles and the development of the Interstate. Dad was six years old when his family moved from rural Texas to California in 1903. A friend with a horse and buggy met the family when they got off the train in Lodi and drove them to their new home. They passed an automobile on the way, and the friend remarked that several people in Lodi already owned cars.



That wasn't the first automobile Dad remembered seeing. One rainy day in Texas a man had knocked on their door and asked to borrow an ax to chop the mud off his tires, when his car had got stuck in front of their farmhouse. Dad also remembered the first airplane he ever saw, and seeing the astronauts walking on the Moon. Unquestionably the major technological revolution in Dad's lifetime was in transportation.

Just as undeniably, the biggest technological revolution I have experienced has been in communication. When I was a boy, Dad and I tried our hands building a crystal set from a kit so I could have a radio in my own room. We must have got something wrong, because you received a mild electric shock every time you touched it, but I did succeed in bringing in a couple of stations with it. In our Sierra summer cabin that lacked electricity, a windup phonograph and its stack of 78's started me on a love of music that is still one of life's major joys. I remember my first television experience, when a friend with a TV invited me to his home to watch the Army-McCarthy Senate hearings. Our first computer was an IBM PC, a clunky dinosaur with miniscule memory, and a kilobyte-sized floppy disk instead of a hard drive for storage. Florence figured out how to use it, sloggng her way through the manual on her own while I was at work, and produced the camera-ready copy for her 300-page genealogy book on that dinosaur.



Circa 1925, boy listening to a Crystal Set radio

Now publishing is done electronically, nearly everyone uses email, every business and even lots of individuals have their own websites, everybody under the age of 20 is on Facebook, Twitter, and I don't know what else, and I'm the only person in Sonoma County who doesn't own a cell phone. What technological revolution will define the life style of the next generation?