Crossing the Digital Divide (v101)
"Ageless"
By Joseph Feigon
For the Observer

It was a good week. Like many of us, I prefer staying *here*, and often tease my friends: "nothing south of Shamrock, please". Again, like many of us, I have family in the Bay Area, and some in New York. This past Sunday, New York was in the Bay Area – we saw both daughters and their respective partners. As Casey would say, it was, a Great Success!

The Digital Divide isn't merely access to a robust Internet connection, it's having an Internet connection and some kind of computer. Remember, your iPhone or Droid is more powerful than IBM's first personal computer. Your Roku, Chromecast, Firestick and pretty much every modern "screen" has a computer inside.

The IBM Personal Computer, commonly known as the IBM PC, is the original version and progenitor of the IBM PC compatible hardware platform. It is IBM model number 5150, and was introduced on August 12, 1981. It was created by a team of engineers and designers under the direction of Don Estridge of the IBM Entry Systems Division in Boca Raton, Florida

Much has changed since 1981, and yet, there's been little change.

Many a grandparent today was young enough in the 80's to have had exposure to the emerging digital revolution. Kids born in the 80's grew up more comfortable banging out reports on a PC or laptop than their parents, yet lost the art of penmanship and conversation in the process. The 'industry' is viciously competitive, yet has continued to deliver value through innovation, new technologies, and new services. In less than four decades, computers can cost less than $100, long distance calls across the planet are less expensive than a Happy Meal, and nearly every bit of information can be found from the convenience of your living room couch.

Truth: Digital information is cheaper, more accessible, more robust, more pertinent, and more intrusive than the methodologies and lifestyles of the late 20th Century. We no longer need to visit a Theatre to watch a movie, we no longer need to visit a grocery store to shop and eat. We no longer need to write with pencil on paper. We no longer need to wait for the news to be delivered to our front porch. It's all there, right on your screen, just a few mouse clicks away…but wait.

Not everyone gets the technology. Not everyone can afford or has need for an iPhone, Android, tablet or personal computer. Not everyone wants to watch "TV", wherever the content arrives from. This is, in part, the beauty of our world, we have choices, somewhat. Here's my takeaway and core to my vision for this community:

Internet access is an imperative, and should be ubiquitous. The telephone was a 19th Century technology, and ushered in a global marketplace for goods and services. "Voice" has limitations, which led to the development and use of the Teletype. The Fax machine killed the teletype business, and the fax business was ravaged by email. Check writing has been replaced by EDI (electronic data interchange), and Foreign Exchange rate negotiations are handled by most banks. All this technology and convenience and speed is great, if it can be put to use to our advantage.

Enjoying life on either side of the digital divide is entirely personal. Choosing not to live in a "Matrix" society is a common theme in rural America, but it doesn't have to be an either-or. The Internet makes it possible to live here and do business in Patagonia, Pleasanton, or Pennsylvania. Having suitable Internet access creates opportunity by reducing geographic restrictions.

Control those things you can, and keep the surprises to a minimum!