

Crossing the Digital Divide (v102)

“Plastic wrap”

By Joseph Feigon
For the Observer

Back sometime in the 20th Century, I had just earned a drivers license. I grew up in a suburban neighborhood, most everything was walking or biking distance away. My parents wouldn't let me use their car for much more than shuffling my younger siblings around, never to head 'over the hill' to Santa Cruz, or scarier still (to my Mom), using their car to enjoy a show at Winterland in San Francisco.

By 17, I had saved enough money from work to buy my own car, *and* pay for the insurance. When I asked my Dad to give me a ride so I could buy this car (a truck, actually), he asked me: “Why do you want a car?” “Dad...I want the freedom a car will provide.” My Dad, a wise man, replied: “Son, you will look back on this afternoon many times in life, and realize, you are freer now than you will ever be.”

Many cars and things later, I know that that moment of freedom was temporary, and would never have lasted anyway. I have grown to realize, things break, wear out, no longer suit their original purpose, or just don't do the job they were supposed to. Computers are one of those things.

I've seen a few new PC's of late, both Windows and Mac, and offer up the following suggestion: take your time with the first power-up and initialization. A short list, but important, primarily because *we* have limited and/or expensive connections to the Internet.

- 1) If you buy an Apple product, setup your iCloud account and validate it at the Apple store, not home. iCloud provides updates, security fixes, and file storage. If you don't have an Internet connection, you may still want to use your computer, as such, when you setup your account, make the login identical to your AppleID, but make the account local the computer;
- 2) If you buy a Windows PC, you *can* bypass the Microsoft Cloud based OneDrive sign in and setup, and create a LOCAL account on the PC, making it easy to use the computer whether or not your Internet connection is working;
- 3) With iCloud and OneDrive, use your cellphone as the verification and two-factor authentication device. If you do get locked out of your accounts, getting email might be tough, but a text page...
- 4) Write your password and account ID down, and save it in a safe (but accessible) place.

I'm often asked, “why is it so complicated?” For those in a connected world (most major metropolitan areas), Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and almost every news source, many financial institutions and health care providers “push” notifications to their subscribers and connected devices. Email is often checked as a background application. Devices receive important security updates. Most end-users expect their iPhone and Macbook to have up-to-date consistency. Apple “assumes” everyone has a robust Internet connection. Microsoft has a slightly different market than does Apple, but their retail audience is being force fed the same Internet dependent solution Apple is.

So, if you've got a new computer to play with, make sure you create a LOCAL account with full administrative permissions so that you can USE your computer with or without an Internet connection, and don't forget to remove all the plastic wrap the factory put on the device – to keep it pretty and cover all the air vents!

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