

Crossing the Digital Divide Volume 31

“Smile”

by Joseph Feigon
for the Observer

Some of us remember analog technologies: film for cameras, paper for correspondence, records (vinyl) for sound reproduction. The art of letter writing has been lost to a world of email, Twitter, and Facebook. The iPhone and Droid based Smartphones have nearly put a headstone on cameras, devices dedicated to capturing motion or still images. Streaming media has put most video stores out of business. DVD and Blu-ray have replaced 8 and 16mm film, VHS and Beta, the remaining media format for those without robust Internet connections.

We all know how pervasive the Smartphone has become. We've witnessed the change in social interaction – Millennials with their heads-down, thumbs waving away, oblivious to their surroundings. But wait, they've got hundreds of Facebook friends, dozens of followers of their Twitter feeds, many more begging for the latest Instagram post. We have the ability to video chat with family across the country, or a buddy on the other side of the planet, send announcements to dozens without having to lick stamps and seal envelopes.

Video can be one-way (recorded) or two-way (live). A live video stream can be recorded to become a one-way stream. Video can be used for training purposes (distance learning), communication (visits to the family), or for reference and review. Video can also be used to extend reach, e.g., lend a watchful eye without fatigue. Recorded video, like the written word, is often open to interpretation. Whatever was said or done, if recorded, can be reviewed and discussed or analyzed. Hearsay, like most oral history, is often riddled with misinformation, often yielding enough confusion the real story is lost.

Most of us are uncomfortable in front of a camera, yet most of us would prefer to *watch* instead of *read*. Some might speculate that our fear of being on-camera might lend itself to a stronger sense of right/wrong. Maybe advertising that *You're on Camera* may provide a level of security otherwise impractical.

For those following my column, it is the rarest of recluses without a digital footprint. Almost everything we do is recorded. Your email, your web searches, your medical history, your fill-ups at the gas station, your travels. I get the *Big Brother* argument, being watched and knowing you're being watched is uncomfortable. The Internet is a man-made, there are rules of the road. The real world has behavior restrictions as well, most make sense, but there are many who feel the rules do not apply to them.

Video is digital information. You can and should assume, if you're visiting a public area, store, restaurant, gas station, park, gallery, bridge, roadway, or beach, that your image and that of your car may well be recorded, date/time stamped, and potentially saved for a long time. Smile, you never know who might be watching, or when.