

South Fayette & NEIGHBORS Magazine

Home | About Us | Advertising | Neighbor Links | Your Neighbor | F.A.Q. | Contact Us
NEIGHBORS

Welcome to
SF & Neighbors!



Read more...
Publisher's Note
Feature Stories
Neighbors
Columns of Knowledge
South Fayette Township
S. Fayette School District
Sports

Open the Pod Bay Door, HAL

By Hank Walshak

My life seems awash in technology. And it is fascinating to me how technology creates its own use addictions, drives behaviors, and creates a culture of busy-ness and immediacy that crowds out leisure time and sensitivities.

If I am not keyboarding at my computer, I am punching messages into a palm digital assistant with a stylus, or calling a business associate on my ever-present cell phone. Yet part of me yearns for a better sense of balance, a more frequent reprieve from these captivating digital devices. Part of me wants to be disconnected from these communication devices that ensnare me, hold me.

Not long ago, I mistakenly downloaded an anti-virus software program into my computer, when I already had another installed. I then rebooted the machine and nothing happened. My computer had suddenly fallen into deep hibernation like a bear in winter. Thus, I learned about the conflicting nature of different types of anti-virus software. Post haste, my computer was on its way to the computer-repair garage.

Suddenly, I was bereft of my near constant companion for three days, and at first felt a sense of withdrawal. I'd sit at my credenza peering at my computer screen gone blank, bemoaning my workaday life without my digital buddy. But not for long. My sense of loss soon morphed into a felt liberation I had not experienced for some time, an unequivocal sense of relief, a serenity, a calm, unenslaved, if you will.

I felt like the character Dave in Stanley Kubrick's surreal, filmic masterpiece "2001: A Space Odyssey." In one scene, HAL, the onboard computer of Dave's space ship, refuses to open the pod bay doors to let Dave reenter the mother ship after he had been outside in the space vehicle called a pod. In a following scene, Dave, out of a realized sense of urgency, disembowels HAL by removing what looked like square batteries from HAL's operating system. HAL then fades away into lifelessness singing in progressively lower registers that turn-of-the-century hit, "A Bicycle Built for Two." Dave is then free of HAL's anti-human machinations. A message from Kubrick? I think so.

I whispered a note of thanks to myself for the meaningful coincidence of my own computer's deep freeze. The separation from my computer was a grab at my collar. I saw how utterly adapted and dependent I had become on my HAL, how attached to this lifeless, inert, gathering of boards and wiring that serves as my business valet.

Yes, my computer has done many things for me, and I feel prompted at times to send it a handwritten thank-you note or a bottle of fine wine, but I know full well that it can neither appreciate my sentiment of gratitude nor enjoy the taste of a hearty Merlot.

Do I wish to divorce myself from my digitized existence? Nah. Not really. But I do want to seek more balance in my life, to breathe in more deeply the nuances of my human existence, to listen to life as it speaks to me in direct ways without benefit of computer, personal digital assistant, and cell phone.



[Click here for our editorial focus for upcoming issues.](#)

Advertisers!

Be a part of our next issue of 'SF & Neighbors', May/June 2005. Our editorial focus for this issue is "Recreation, Summer Camps & Education."

For more info, please call us at 412-257-9564 or email.us.

Copyright 2005. SF & Neighbors. All rights reserved. No portion of this website or SF & Neighbors magazine may be reproduced without written permission of the publisher.