

## Language Barrier

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Nearly 10 years ago my parents purchased their first computer. Foolishly, my siblings and I thought this meant we could teach them how to get online, check email and possibly even shop. For weeks the computer, screen and printer remained sealed in boxes in their living room precisely where the UPS delivery man sat them. Finally, my brother began the tedious task of unpacking and setting up. While unpacking this beast of a machine, mom and dad stood over him looking like they had just seen a dinosaur. The fun really started when he tried to show them how to get online. This was the age of dial up so the screeching of the impending connection frightened both of them so much they refused to turn it on unless one of their

children was with them.

While visiting my parents one day, I got online and tried to show my mom how simple it could be. I left her with detailed instructions of how to get online, on her own. That evening she called and before I could finish saying 'hello' she cut in and said, "Becky, daddy says you broke the computer." In the background of this conversation I could hear my dad slapping the side of the computer screen saying, "Yeah it's broken. I knew it. I told those kids we should have just kept the typewriter." When I asked her what the computer was doing to make them think it was broken she said, "The computer doesn't have to be plugged into a phone jack to get online. And when you came over you plugged it in so now it's broken." Since this was before wireless or broadband, I had to explain that there was no way they were online without being plugged into a phone jack. It was no use. They didn't get it.

Last Christmas-after years of ignoring the fact that he needed to leap into the 21st century and not only buy a computer but learn how to operate it- dad decided it was time.

After talking about what he wanted in a computer the salesman looked at me like, "Are you seriously going to let a man who calls DVD's a 'circle thing' buy a computer?"

He decided on a laptop because according to my dad, "It can play the movie circle things or the music circle things and it's small. And I can even type a letter using words(words was his name for Microsoft Word). My dad would only listen to about half of what the salesman would tell him then he would make up his own computer dialog.

Sometime after purchasing his laptop, dad decided he needed to go all out and get flat screen television. He picked out everything himself and after it was set up he wanted me to come over so I could see. It was impressive and dad was very proud. He even bought a DVD/VCR combo. Only when he was telling me about it he said, "This is perfect! It can play the circles or squares." I just smiled and watched him explain the proper way to handle a circle when inserting it into the player. This little moment with my dad made me realize that while he may have his own language when it comes to electronics since he was patient enough to listen to me when I was learning to talk I know I can be patient enough to listen to him now.

*To reach Becky Andrews email her at*