

LEFT BEHIND

I've been left behind.

At one time, I kept fairly good pace with technology. Dealing with computers, fax machines and cell phones did not make me break into hives. I could run all the appliances in my house without ending up in a fetal position. I could even program my own VCR without assistance from my children. But now it seems technology is racing ahead of me at lightning speed. I can no longer keep up with my upgrades or down with my downloads. I can't figure out how to choose my own cell phone ring, a computer error message has the power to paralyze me, and I can't even take a picture with my own camera without consulting a 30-page manual.

I'm thinking it's time to give up, wave the white flag, and come out with my hands up. I should have predicted this ultimate surrender to the technology gods based on my initial entrance into the world of computers. It was back in high school, when I was simply trying to make a smiling face out of hundreds of letter X's using a prehistoric Radio Shack TRS-80 computer that had a cassette recorder for memory. When I was just about to push the button that would make the X's curve into a triumphant grin, the cassette ribbon unraveled and the recorder promptly ate nine weeks of work. I was the one wearing the frown.

Now, while the gadgets and gizmos in my house continue to reproduce and morph from one version to the next faster than I can devour a plate of chocolate chip cookies, I am sitting on the sidelines watching the techno-parade go by. Even my television remote controls have moved on without me. One night last week I wandered out to the living room to watch a boring TV show that would hopefully lull my stubborn brain to sleep. But I couldn't watch the boring TV show, because *I didn't know how to turn on the TV*. Let me just pause here while that sinks in. *I really couldn't turn on my own television set*. The one previous remote control had multiplied into five and they were splayed all over the coffee table, mocking me. I punched several thousand buttons on each remote to no avail—all I got was a glowing blue screen with no sound. I couldn't even do it the old-fashioned way by actually getting up off the couch and pressing the ON button. It was 2 a.m. and I was desperate so I did what all good wives would do—I stomped into the bedroom, woke up my husband and made him turn on the set for me.

The morning after the TV incident, I sought solace in my comparatively low-tech vehicle. After all, I had mastered its power locks and windows long ago. But then I accidentally pressed the emergency OnStar button when I meant to open the garage door. The nice lady on the line understood my situation, gave me a refresher course on the buttons and forgave me for my modern technology learning disability.

Hey....I wonder if she could help me turn on my TV?

Mary Beth Weisenburger lives in Putnam County with her husband, two kids and too many remote controls.