



Well, we and our electronic household gadgets made it through the 9-9-99 computerization concern.

But, we may never make it to the Y2K crisis stage.

Because if one or more of the electronic gadgets around here goes goofy on me, I'm going to use the tried and true method, which—sometimes in desperation—fixes the small magnet in the floats in our milker units when they stick.

Whack 'em with a shovel handle.

Actually, when my computer keyboard began doing weird things to the programs—like giving me a row of "3s" when a zero was struck, or jumping to some

other spot on the page when the letters p, t, s, or apostrophe were struck—I was tempted to try a suggestion made by our computer-teacher daughter.

Immerse the keyboard in a bathtub of warm water.

No, no, not to drown the irritating thing—though the idea was sorely tempting. Trying to print payment checks and write columns had become a time-wasting exercise in frustration and impossibility.

No, the idea is to soak loose any dust and possible spills of stuff which may have gotten under a key and created some sort of electronic short. Supposedly, the warm bath loosens any interfering goop and

allows the keyboard to function unimpeded once again.

But, of course, then it has to really dry out. And in the rain-forest humidity environment in which this part of the country has existed in recent weeks, it's hard to get even a thin pair of nylon hose dry without throwing them in the dryer. And the dryer didn't seem a viable option for the keyboard. Besides, if the keyboard had a problem, as the computer itself kept telling me at boot-up, then a replacement was in order.

After exhausting reasonably-easy fix-it attempts, I resigned myself to going into battle with the phone menus and voice mail exchanges of 1-800-DOG-GONE computer support. Ultimately, I was assigned an "event" number by a helpful lady support technician, who after coaching me through several fix tries, suggested plugging in another keyboard to make sure that was the problem. And noted that, if it was, a company replacement was possibly in order.

I did. It was.

Next day, in a followup, I got another technician, with no clue as to what the first had done, who wanted me to start switching component plugs around. Even though it seemed the key-

board was the obvious problem.

On deadlines and in a writing time crunch, I nixed playing with component plugs and placed a call to my favorite local computer sales/service people, who warmly and promptly supplied me with a keyboard. First thing I wrote with it was a long letter to the computer company's customer service department.

Meanwhile, if you recently called the farm here, left a message, and have not received a reply, please accept my sincere apologies. Our message machine has an "erase" button, which I punched last week instead of the "play" button. And sent a bunch of messages into electronic eternity.

Oops! Sorry about that.

And, by accident, we have discovered yet another way to irritate innocent phone callers. Put

the fax machine in automatic mode. It does cause the fax machine to pick up those calls immediately. And also diverts all phone calls.

Oops! Sorry about that, too.

From the VCR, which operates with lines running across the screens after overheating, to The Farmer's cell phone (which can reach him at an equipment company across the river but not around to the far side of the hill beyond the meadow) to the faceless, voiceless, digital phone menu with which we communicate by punching numbers, I sometimes feel as if we are all victims of what I would label the looming social problem of the fast-approaching Millennium.

Electronics abuse.

Maybe if we just switched around all the component plugs...



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