

Resolved for the New Year: Let's Learn Something Exciting

Written by Jack Sparacino

Tuesday, 30 December 2014 14:26 - Last Updated Sunday, 04 January 2015 13:56



How many of us will take yet another deep breath as we enter this new year, maybe grab an antacid, and make those annual new year's resolutions?

And no wonder we feel daunted. Many of those resolutions are tough ones and not necessarily realistic. The most popular ones include losing weight, quitting smoking, getting better organized, finding a better job, saving more and spending less, and enjoying life to the fullest (while, of course, eating healthier on that new job and saving piles of money!).

Many people also vow to "*learn something exciting.*" Now we're talking. I was just thinking about that recently while looking over a CNN report entitled "11 Skills Your Great-Grandparents Had That You Don't." Starting with these skills from about a century ago, we get a nostalgic but pretty reasonable—and exciting—list.

1) Courting. Can you spell "quaint?" Courting was the process by which young men became involved romantically with potential mates. A gentleman would secure permission from a (typically) young woman's family to call on them and visit formally. Often he would leave a calling card and if all went well, he'd be invited back and off the happy couple would go to pursue their mutual attraction.

2) Hunting, fishing and foraging. How much closer to wondrous nature can you get when it

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Emma

8) Making lace. Says CNN: “Tatting, the art of making lace, was a widely popular activity for young women in your great-grandparents’ generation. Elaborate lace collars, doilies, and other decorative touches were signs of sophistication.” But be careful how you lace up your skates, hockey fans.

9) Lighting a fire without matches. Safe matches weren’t available until after 1910, so people had to make do with other tools and techniques. And one could always call for a Boy Scout.

10) Diapering with cloth. Oooh, how old school. (And ‘laced’ with unmentionables.) But eco-friendly, of course.

11) Writing with a fountain pen. Ballpoints weren’t around until the late 1930’s, so knowing how to use a “real” pen and inkwell was useful. (When I was in grade school, our old desks still had a hole in them for ink bottles.)

It seems to me that learning just about any of these skills would be pretty exciting. Especially if several of them could be integrated. Just imagine courting Alice or Sylvia and amusing her with tales of how you caught a bunch of redfish, bagged some deer and then bartered them for some beautiful lace dainties before writing to tell your parents about it with your brand new fountain pen—traded for a half bushel of onions!

Now if we plant both feet squarely in 2015, there are very close to too many interesting if not exciting things to learn. This is especially true for those of us who are a bit older. You know, like twenty times older than the most senior item in the back of the refrigerator; old enough to remember running computer programs using IBM punch cards, or driving without power

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windows. Here are eleven such contemporary skills and associated products to consider.

- 1) Looking just cool enough on your flexible smart phone and knowing how to avoid using them at restaurants (especially when you're courting).
- 2) Parallel parking using those rear view cameras.
- 3) Avoiding at least 80% of all the ads we're bombarded with.
- 4) Figuring out creative ways to say no thanks to people who make solicitation calls at dinner time.
- 5) Shopping on-line almost anywhere except Amazon, where they make it altogether easy.
- 6) Figuring out when your heating pad is set too high.
- 7) Navigating through a bazillion choices of soap, shampoo and toothpaste without losing your bearings or forgetting why you came into the store in the first place.
- 8) Learning the precise distinction between partly sunny and partly cloudy on those 5-day forecasts
- 9) Asking for directions calmly and confidently when the person you approach knows you have GPS.
- 10) Finding time to cook instead of watching cooking shows.

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11) Remembering people's names for longer than the 3-4 seconds it takes them to say it.

Want to really impress your friends—and yourself? Learn to do at least three of these at the same time while resisting the urge to use the word “multi-tasking” or looking like a dork (older person) or dorkette (younger person). Maybe invent your own hybrid exciting skills that link the past and present... like bartering for a new GPS, using that heating pad to light a fire, or using a fountain pen to provide hand written customer feedback to your favorite shampoo maker. How's *that* for excitement?