Another Digital Reincarnation

I'm well into the sundown years of my life. I accept this fact without regret. I've had a good life, and I am enjoying my present stay on earth. These moments are fulfilling, except for one thorn in my wrinkled skin: I continue to outlive the lives of my computers. With the recent purchase of a new computer, I make this public declaration: *I hope my new computer outlives me*.

Every few years my computer dies. Not physically, I plug it in, turn it on, and it goes about doing what it has been designed to do. It continues to meet my needs, at least in this Luddite's opinion.

But computer and software vendors inform me my computer does *not* meet my needs. They inform me my needs have changed. Their sales department tells me I have future needs of which I am not yet aware. Apparently, their Clairvoyant Department of Marketing can see into my future requirements. They explain my old system should be replaced by a superior, more potent package, one that will invariably make my life more productive.

These enhancements may be wonderful, except for one point: I don't need them. But my antiquated needs are irrelevant to the marketers. Their research into my browsing habits reveals that a new computer and enhanced software are going to provide services I will come to learn I cannot live without.

Even if I do not succumb to these sales pitches, as I add an Internet service here, and an Internet service there, my computer eventually becomes lethargic to my keystrokes. It's akin to two lovers who little by little become weary of their strokes on each other. Gradually, the wait-time for something to happen extends from an instant to a couple seconds, to several seconds, to many seconds, to an infinite wait---at which time I shut down (as do the lovers), go to sleep, and hope for a better tomorrow. I wistfully think all I need do is restart my computer, and the hardware will somehow magically adjust itself to support these incremental additions.

Thus, the hardware on my computer---and therefore my entire computer, even the perfectly functioning screen and keyboard---invariably finds its way into the graveyard of obsolescence. It becomes too old and too slow to handle recent software "innovations."

Vendors routinely announce new versions of their software products. These improved versions often require more powerful hardware if the products are to perform as promoted in the sellers' marketing propaganda. I usually am taken in. I buy the new software along with a requisite computer to support the software, only to regret it later.

I made the mistake of moving away from a software system that controls the computer (the operating system, or OS) to a new version of the same vendor's product. It was one of the worst systems ever dumped on the public. A few years ago, I replaced this software with an OS that actually worked as advertised. I also purchased a higher-horsepower computer to support the enhanced features of the OS. I liked this new system. As much as one can relate to inanimate objects, I became fond of it.

Digital Death

A few days ago, my tried-and-true PC gave up the ghost. Without warning, it stopped working, reminding me of my fate in the not too distant future. A visit to the

local computer store convinced me the machine was not economically salvageable. No problem! I was ready to go on digital life-support: I had a backup computer.

But I had not fired it up for several years. Returning home, I dusted it off, turned it on, and was informed it did not work with wireless (Wi-Fi) devices. My printer is Wi-Fi. My Internet router is Wi-Fi. My backup computer was dead before it was alive.

Hurrying back to the computer store, I purchased another new computer. I no longer had a backup, but that could come later. I needed to return online as soon as possible before I lost touch with reality.

I expressed to the salesperson that I wanted a computer that ran with the old OS. He responded, "Sorry. All new PCs run with the new OS." Not even an option; software dictatorship. I did not need new software. My hardware had expired, but my software was alive and ticking. I had a modest desire to continue writing emails and surfing the Web. I had no need for anything but what I already had.

Digital Reincarnation

Having no choice, I purchased a new PC that ran with the new---according to the vendor ---"revolutionary" software. With this acquisition, I transcended from digital death to digital reincarnation. Finally, I could get back to work. Returning home, I unpackaged my new computer and turned it on. That's when I made the plea to the computer god in the sky to let me die before this young computer grew old and passed-away.

My lighted keyboard did not light. My printer did not print. My backup hard-drive did not drive. Some commercial software applications did not accept the hardware, or vice-versa. The temporary security software, sensing a new prey, inserted a marketing screen onto my Internet sessions that had no "cancel" or "X" delete feature. It stayed on my screen, even after I had logged-off the Internet. My only recourse to this intrusion was to restart my PC. To cap off my problems, I plugged-in my multiport USB device into one of the computer's USB ports. The screen flashed. The machine froze. My infant computer was still-born.

I hurried back to the store to turn-in the still frozen computer. The local store was out-of-stock of the machine of my choice. I needed a computer soon, thus I drove 30 miles to another store to pick up the desired brand. Returning to the local store, I was charged an additional $80 for another file transfer from a never-to-be-born computer to what I desperately hoped would be a soon-to-be-born computer. Success! After three days of digital turmoil, I had a functional PC and associated software.

Many people give their machine to a computer guru, and say, "Make it work, don't bother me with the details." If I hang around beyond the life span of my new computer, I will do the same. I'm fed up with my enhanced productivity.

I expect my new machine will expire in six or seven years. So, I retract my earlier statement that I hope my computer outlives me. I hope to live a bit (or byte) longer than the machine on which I am writing this lament. The dust has settled on my recent repurchase. I'm pleased with the new computer. I will forget about these past few days of frustration, and will I will likely continue to buy new digital machines in the future.

By the way, my new computer keyboard has a key, that when pressed, presents screens from the old OS. Now *that's* progress.