

Good thing we didn't find E.T.



It's closing time for "Family Week". Today's final post relates to my family's unique challenges with phones.

We can start with me, a staunch resister of cellular phones for as long as possible and then even longer. One was forced on me during my last few years at work (I can't honestly say it contributed to my leaving, but I don't mind stretching the truth). Those were days of increased travel and they wanted the electronic "leash" to call me with important questions like "how's it going?" and "any news?". Riveting stuff.

Still, when it came time to switch into impoverished author mode, I figured a cell phone with internet access would come in handy at the beach. I was correct and I still own that iPhone 3GS. I have no interest in the newest phones, I don't need my phones being smarter than me.

On the other end of the spectrum is Dad. He enjoys the cell phone immensely, since he likes to talk and receives many calls from people of like persuasion. But he only uses his phone as a phone, so when we finally joined forces on the same plan, he specifically looked for an "old-fashioned" flip cell phone with big numbers. No internet. No email.

Yesterday, trying to check in with Dad about my Stepmom's improvement, I left a voice message before heading out to my weekly poker night. Later that evening, I had a voice mail back from Dad saying he "noticed I left a message" and if it

was important to call him as late as 11 pm. Or, maybe, he could *listen* to my message instead of *noticing* it and then he wouldn't have to wonder. Yoiks!

My nieces are interesting creatures. Products of today's techno-society, they love to have the newest and best phones. This is an opportunity that seems to come up frequently as they have a habit of losing or breaking their phones. More cynical minds than mine might find that suspicious; I just assume they have inherited the Daniels klutz gene.

My older niece has a tendency to talk at odd angles to the phone, sometimes near her, sometimes away, sometimes I don't know where. Occasionally we even get a conversation where I hear her completely. Occasionally. My younger niece, on the other hand, never answers her phone. Whether the ringer is off or she's screening calls, I don't know, but until today (a thank you call for her birthday card), I think I've only ever gotten one other call from her.

Which is certainly not the case with her Mom. My sister has always been the one person to consistently stay in touch with me on the phone. I take off my hat to her, although, granted, sometimes I also have to take off my Bluetooth because her calls have (on occasion) been a wee bit long. The trade-off is worth it, though, as it's good to keep in touch with family.

So, in light of the post's headline, let's review: If E.T. left a message for Dad, it might not be listened to. If he left it for my nieces, assuming they could find their phones and they weren't broken, he might not be able to hear one and the other wouldn't pick up. And if he called my Sister, he better hope he wasn't on a countdown timer.

This is one family E.T. shouldn't phone home.