

# Robo-calls have become the plague of the 21st century

**Kathy Hedberg/Lewiston Tribune**

I don't know anybody who enjoys getting robo-calls on their telephones.

"Oh my, I got the most delightful phone call from the nicest young man trying to sell me life insurance. Such a sweet voice - reminded me of my grandson. When I tried to explain that I already have a satisfying life insurance policy, he just kept talking on and on, as if he didn't hear me, but it was a lovely phone call, anyway."

That does not happen.

It used to be, before there was caller ID, almost every phone call was a welcome surprise. You never knew who was calling you and it was kind of exciting to answer the phone. At least you knew it was a live person. Even when the occasional wrong number happened, people were kind enough to apologize, and sometimes those accidental exchanges bloomed into a friendship.

The only unwelcome intruders on your time came to your front door, trying to sell you vacuums or encyclopedias or foot cream. Although door-to-door salesmen could get obnoxious, you could always close the door on them - but before you did you might have wanted to check out their products and find yourself persuaded that you really did need a new set of encyclopedias.

Life is completely different now. The only ones who go door to door these days are Girl Scouts and Jehovah's Witnesses. And if you needed a new set of encyclopedias you'd have to download it on your computer - you don't even have a bookshelf anymore because you chopped it up for firewood.

But even in this changed world, robo-calls are annoyances. First of all, who knows what they're talking about? Sometimes the messages don't make any sense, as in the robo-calls I got last year, supposedly from the IRS threatening to sue me if I didn't call them back right away and give them my credit card number to pay late taxes.

I knew it was a fake - I'd already filed my tax returns and the government owed me. But the robo-calls kept coming.

During the election season, robo-calls were like mosquitoes. They were everywhere - sometimes every 15 minutes some politician would dial you up and give you this long, pre-recorded spiel about why you should vote for him.

If you had a few choice words to say you, never got the chance because you were not talking to a real person. The shocker was when the election came around the people we put into office were real human beings, or so it seemed.

But when we started writing letters to our state and national representatives, expressing our concerns about this or that, what we got in return was a form letter, telling us how hard our representative is working but responding to our specific concerns not at all.

Apparently we elected the robot after all.

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