

# Looking back to the Future - Ten things that are better now than when I was a kid



David Holmes, 2012-07-01

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A lot of us get reminiscent at year's end, and I'm no exception. I was born in 1970 so I'm not really an old-timer yet but I've been around long enough to have noticed some significant changes in the world. So here's my list of what's better now than when I was a kid.

- 1. The Internet.** Anyone in the world can communicate with anyone else. This is leading to ubiquitous Democracy and the betterment of humankind far beyond what I envisioned when I first started using it in 1989. You don't even want to know about the stupid stuff we used it for back then.
- 2. Gender Equality.** I don't think there's ever been a better time in human history than right now (at least in Western Civilization to be female. Women can be whatever they want to be and it's okay. Professionals everywhere have to take yearly four-hour anti-harassment training (my last training was a Flash-based app with streaming video and quizzes). The training reminds me how bad things used to be just 25 years ago. If I had a daughter I would be thankful that she was born into this time period.
- 3. Smartphones.** Are you kidding me? These things are awesome. They're like the communicators on Star Trek, but better!
- 4. Television.** High-Definition. Hundreds of channels. Streaming directly to your TV. One hundred great shows on every year: Walking Dead, Game of Thrones, Lost, Battlestar Galactica (the new one is so much better), South Park, The Jon Stewart Show. We didn't have ANYTHING like that when I was a kid; we had to watch the same reruns of Gilligan's Island, The Love Boat, and Fantasy Island (The Plane! The Plane!).
- 5. Movies.** Even bad movies are good now – directors have figured out the best ways to tell a story, so that even something that is just mediocre now is as good as the best movies when I was a kid. Bold, creative directors are rewarded and given opportunities to make amazing, mind-blowing movies (Inception). When I was a kid we had 30 movies starring [Rutger Hauer](#) (note: I still love Rutger Hauer, don't get me wrong).
- 6. Travel.** Airplanes used to fall out of the sky with alarming regularity, and the ones that didn't were full of people barfing as planes bounced around in the clouds. Now it's been over 10 years since a major US carrier had an epic fail and modern radar keeps almost every flight smoother than a bus ride. The WiFi on the plane makes it one of my most productive workplaces (no distractions). And it's so cheap now! I regularly wake up in one city and go to sleep in another, and I try not to take it for granted.
- 7. Food.** I swear food is tastier now. Food scientists and culinary experts have figured out how to mix sweet and crunchy textures to make things that are almost irresistible. Maybe this is not so good for the country's waist-line, but my taste buds sure appreciate the progress.
- 8. Mental Health Services.** Believe it or not, going to a therapist or counselor just 30 years ago was still stigmatized. Society now is much more acceptable and the phrase "there's no shame in therapy" has lost its sarcastic sting. People can get help now, and don't have to suffer in solitude.
- 9. Cars.** Cars are safer, get better gas mileage, and last three times longer. Bold designs are everywhere and anyone can get almost any kind of car: hybrids are hot, muscle cars are back, and college kids get all kinds of artsy, boxy contraptions. It's a great age for the automobile.
- 10. Clothes.** First of all, yes, it was the '70s when I grew up, and the designs of the time seemed to reflect the mind-altering drugs that everyone was still recovering from. Today's clothes are smart, cheap, and usually fit well (if you buy right). Admission: my sister-in-law insisted that this be included in my list but I'm inclined to agree with her.

There you have it, a retrospective top 10 that anyone in their 40s (or older) can find some common ground with. You're probably asking, "What does this have to do with network security?" Well it has a lot to do with it. You see, a lot of the precious comforts of modern life depend on networks to make them possible. Insecure network infrastructures don't just imperil data; they may inhibit our technological, cultural, and social growth. Therefore, it's important for us in the IT industry to monitor and protect our digital highways, allowing the march of progress to continue.

When I think of how much things have changed in the first half of my life, I am hopeful to see how the world will improve in the second half. One thing I know for sure, secure networks will keep playing a critical, but often unsung role.

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