

## Social Science and Hotdogs

When I think about some of the things that I've experienced over the past years, there seems to be a widening disconnect between our technological advancements and our social development. I have always loved science and building things, so I decided at the ripe old age of eight to build for my school science project, a better and faster hot dog cooker. (Warning! Do not to try this at home!) I drove two large nails through a piece of plywood, hooked electrical wires to each, added a switch and an electrical plug and Presto... a beautifully simple and (as we all know now) deadly kitchen appliance. When a hot dog was impaled across the nails and the switch was thrown, the unsuspecting hot dog was immediately cooked to the point of being split open, leaving the smell of electrified pork product in the air.

I know... cool, right? But, because of everyone's reaction to what now would be considered a weapon of some type, this actually turned out to be more of a "social" experiment. My parents had seen me build similar things before and seemed mildly interested but unconcerned. The bus driver didn't bat an eye as I carried it proudly onto the school bus, and even my teacher seemed interested, yet unalarmed. My demonstration at Bonita Springs Elementary was a success. Something between an infomercial and Young Frankenstein. Amazingly, no one was electrocuted (except the hot dog), I wasn't expelled and after the schools fuses were all replaced and the power came back on, everything returned to normal. Well... except for the strange smell that legend has it, still lingers there.

Things are a lot different now. To begin with, I don't think you can even bring a plastic butter knife to school. And technology wise, when you wanted to know something back then, like "Is this hot dog cooker going to cook me too?" you went to the "World Book Encyclopedia". Of course, we now have most all of man's accumulated knowledge and experience (after you sift through all the weird stuff) right here on our home computers via the Internet.

Technology has not only drastically out paced our ability to understand it, at times it doesn't seem to have added equally to our general understanding of the world around us, improved our ability to reason or allowed us to socially understand or tolerate each other better. We recently had a DSL computer line installed in our cabin, in the middle of nowhere in Georgia. I had high hopes regarding this subject and thought, "The 21<sup>st</sup> century has come to the Mountains". Soon after, the DSL serviceman came out to locate the lines buried under the road. He stepped out of his truck and armed with a bent wire in each hand as divining rods, he proceeded to "conjure up" the fairly obvious location of the utility line. I know some of you are saying, "That really works!" I prefer to just savor the sweet irony of socio-technological whiplash.