

Inventions:

On certain snowy days I find myself pensive, sitting and thinking, taking the long view of my own good life. On this snowy day I have been enumerating the earth shaking inventions, contraptions, systems and gadgets which have contributed to the fabric of my years on the earth. I am compiling a list of the most important ideas of my lifetime. Some of them, like Immunization are monumentally important to the world, while others like Double Sided Tape, have proved vital on a more personal level.

I have not attempted to list them in order of importance. That would be folly because, on any given day, a seemingly insignificant toy might be more important than a universally accepted new technology. A Decoder Ring might well be more useful than my Cell Phone. It depends on what you're doing, doesn't it? For instance, if I'm sitting here in the woods with a secret message from Captain Video, what could possibly be more important than the ring that will decipher it? Certainly not my cell phone which is invisible to the local towers and therefore about as useful as a third shoe. Likewise, if you need to make a "mound of julienne fries" what would serve you better, a Microchip or your Vegematic? I hope I am making it clear that the importance of an invention is often relative.

One more qualifier before I begin. I am calling these inventions Important. By important I do not necessarily mean good or bad. Some entries on my list are clearly one or the other, e.g. Vaccinations or the Hydrogen Bomb. Others may be both good and bad, for instance, the Remote Control. I will let you struggle with the ethics of things while I do the listing.

So without further delay I offer, for your amusement, my choices for the most important inventions of my lifetime.

World Wide Web
Microchips (macrochips were so unwieldy, and salty)
Remote Control
Double Sided Tape
Earth Orbiting Satellites (much more useful than Neptune orbiting)
Compact Discs
Crazy Glue (de-bonder for ungluing fingers is also important)
Space Exploring Vehicles
Frisbee (second only to the ball as the greatest toy ever)
Digitalization of information (analog is so yesterday)

Decoder Rings
Ronco's Vegematic (it both slices and dices)
Lasers
Fiber Optics (crucial for eye regularity)
Rock and Roll
Cliff Notes (gave us more time for rock and roll)
Filter Cigarettes (smoking becomes part of a healthy diet)
Portable Telephones
Nuclear Fission and Fusion (scary and scarier)
Wireless Technologies (we were this close to being wirefull)
Childhood Immunizations
Big Box Stores (the end of the small town's downtown)
Mapping the Genome
Smart Bombs (finally, war is noble and humane and clever)

It occurs to me that my list occasionally wanders into editorializing. Go figure. I apologize to those of you who support Smart Weapons or Wal-Mart or both.

Cable TV (twelve football games at once)
E bay
Ultrasound Embryo Imaging
Genetic Engineering (stay tuned, we ain't seen nothin' yet)
MRI's
The Fox Network (eliminating that silly line between news and fun)
Alternative Energy (it'll be useful when the oil runs out)

Hey, this is fun. I invite you to play along with me. Make a list of the ten most important inventions of your life. I'd love it if you sent your list along to me. I'm sure that I'm leaving out dozens of critical items. Besides, we all know that one person's indispensable machine can be another person's doorstop. And feel free to opine while you're making your list. Editorializing is kind of like the chocolate sauce on a sundae.

Lithium Batteries
Cloning (mini me, mini you, mini us)
Gas Grills
Google
Reality TV (so lifelike, really, really)
Hydrogen Fuel Cells
And finally.... McDonald's

I think that about covers it. Anything else will have to wait for another list.