



Mass Media Through the Ages: Snapshot into the Life of Stanley Gezella

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1 DIGITAL DEVICES/INTERNET:

When my grandpa was a young boy in the late 1930s and 1940s, his family had an switchboard dial, which became especially popular during WWI (History Channel). It began to phase out in the late 1930s; however, because Stanley lived in the a rural area, his family used their switchboard dial into the 1940s until they got a landline. My grandpa's still remembers that his operating number for the switchboard dial was 15R1. Eventually in the early 2000s, he got a flip phone, which was serviced through U.S. Cellular.

My grandpa did not use the internet often until about 2017 because he did not have any digital devices or internet services at home. In 2017, my parents got my grandpa an Apple iPad as a birthday and Christmas gift. According to my grandpa, this was one of the best gifts that he had received, as he realized how handy having a digital device was for many practical functions. He mainly uses his iPad for taking pictures, playing digital games, facetimeing with family/friends, attending virtual doctor appointments (especially during Covid), reading the Green Bay Press Gazette, and staying connected with friends/relatives on Facebook. While the iPad my grandpa got is a 5th generation version, it still functions well and allows him to use it in all the aforementioned ways (Apple).

During the pandemic, the iPad became especially important for both my grandpa and my grandma, as it allowed them to stay connected with their loved ones. My grandpa downloaded and played many casual games on his iPad during Covid such as Solitaire, Mahjong, Hearts, and Poker, which kept him entertained when he was not able to go out as much. Furthermore, my grandpa could order books and other products online through Amazon, reducing his time in stores during the pandemic (Apple).

In early 2021, my mom gave my grandpa her iPhone 5 SE to try because he liked the iPad a lot. The iPad allowed him to get used to Apple products, which helped him transition to the iPhone from his flip phone. My grandpa likes using the iPhone because he can ask Siri questions and get navigational directions. Furthermore, he can also use Facetime, Google Duo, and What's App anywhere with LTE and data services. Overall, the iPhone has allowed him to communicate and stay connected even better (Apple).



2 SOUND RECORDING/RADIO:

My grandpa did not listen to sound recordings very often at his house in Poland, Wisconsin; however, he remembers having a few 78 rpm records and, later on, some 45 rpm records when they came out in 1949 (Rolling Stone). As a young boy in the late 1930s-1940s, Stanley was allowed to listen to records on his family's Victrola record player, located in his living room, after he finished chores on the farm (Victrola). When he was allowed to listen to records, he enjoyed Polka music as well as songs by Elvis Presley. Elvis' song "That's all Right" happened to be a popular 45 rpm record during the mid-1950s, as the 45 rpm was smaller and more compact than 78 rpm records (Rolling Stone).

My grandpa remembers recordings costing roughly a dollar or even less (around 65 cents), depending on the artists during his teenage years in the late 1940s and into the 1950s (Rolling Stone). Additionally, when my grandpa went out to restaurants and diners with friends, he also liked listening to music on jukeboxes, which cost about 10 cents per song. This became a popular practice during the 1950s (Victrola).

The radio was something that Stanley enjoyed even more than sound recordings, as he grew up during the Golden Age of the radio, which was between the 1920s to the early 1950s (PBS). On the radio, he loved listening to Hop Along Cassidy, Roy Rogers, Lone Ranger, sporting events, and mystery stories like Perry Mason while milking cows. My grandpa remembers how the radio had a variety of programs including dramas, shows, and comedies, which he continued to enjoy even with the introduction of the television in the 1950s (PBS). Many of Stanley's favorite radio programs, such as Hop Along Cassidy, a western program starting actor William Boyd, became television adaptations after experiencing major success and popularity on the radio (The Saturday Evening Post).

While my grandpa does not remember having many technical problems like humming or distortions of sound when listening to the radio in the mid-1950s, he believes the radio is better when he listens to it today, as there are more stations and events to tune into (BBC). Like many people today, Stanley enjoys listening to the radio in the car.

3 TELEVISION/MOVIES:

Televisions became popular in American households during the 1950s. However, my grandpa did not remember a lot of people who purchased a television right away in the early 1950s because of how expensive they cost. During the early 1950s, televisions cost around \$400 but could vary slightly depending on the television set (Acting College). Because televisions cost a significant amount of money at the time, as a teen, my grandpa would stand outside the grocery store in his town and watch television through the store's window. His family eventually got a television set in mid-1950s.

In the early years of television, it had awful reception; Stanley remembered the television picture coming in unclear or with a lot of snow (blurry static). Additionally, televisions had fewer channels available than it does today, as my grandpa only remembers having about 2-3 channels at a time that carried reception to his house. His family had one television set, and they would watch whatever channels were the clearest together in the living room. Some of the programs my grandpa liked to watch included wrestling matches, the news, and American Bandstand. These programs often incorporated commercials for products like Camel Cigarettes, Pepsi Cola, and beer (TV Days).

Likewise, my grandpa recalled when the public's trust in television took a hit, as the quiz show scandals in the late 1950s affected shows that my grandparents watched together, including the "\$64,000 Question". This quiz show, like many others, got busted for rigging content and giving participants the answers. Subsequently, my grandpa stopped watching quiz shows, which became a common response toward these scandals (PBS).

My grandpa really loved going to the movies with his friends when he was a child growing up in the 1940s-1950s. He enjoyed watching movies with Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, and country western films, which were popular during the time. Stanley often went to the movie theater in Denmark, Wisconsin with his brothers and friends. Unlike today's expensive movie tickets, it only costs about 50 cents to attend the movies in the 1950s (USA Today). The movie theaters were also much smaller, as my grandpa only remembers about 50 seats in the movie theater.

At the time, country westerns remained a popular genre of movies during the 1940s-1950s. However, movies like "Gone With the Wind" also gained a lot of hype when it came out in 1939, as my grandpa remembered when my grandma and other girls saw the romance drama, which today is considered questionable because of its racial stereotyping (NY Times).

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