*Ottawa Outlook, nee North Hero News and World Review …. ……. Mostly stuff no one else would print.*

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**2010 … Phone… Odyssey**

 We have just survived an out of this World experience.

 Background: We’ve lately been plagued with ‘lectronic leprechauns’. Our email keeps asking and rejecting our sign-in, plus … sends innocent items to the spam folder.. Maybe the time has come to sign up with *“Nerds on Site”.*  One of the TV’s in the house has something against Channel 13 and refuses to remote past channel 12. Lastly the phone! Incoming calls started giving one short chirp and immediately switching to dial tone. Your *“Ottawa Outlook”* staff could call out, but not receive calls! In all truth, while one of same staff thought they now had the perfect phone, … something had to be done to this leprechaun. Ken was elected (appointed) to contact the phone service company. He is given the latest phone bill and the service number. Grouchily, … he heads to the phone.

 The service number is dialed. A female voice answers.

 *“Welcome, … you … have … reached … our …service … dept. Tell … me …do … you … have … your … latest … bill … handy”*

Holy Moly, a computer*. “Yes I do”*

*“What … is … your … phone … number.*

 *“613-761-6519”*

 *“Tell … me … your … name.”*

 *“My … name … is …. George Jefferson”.* Good Grief, now I’m talking just like, … just like …, wonder what her name is anyway? A slight pause.

 *“That … is … not… the … ‘voice’ … we … have … on … file … for … this … account. Pease … state … your … name … again”*

 Not the ‘voice’? What kind of a check is this? We were ready with the maiden names of mothers and got thrown a curve. Hmmmn. The bill is looked at. Oh, oh, … the only name on the bill is Lucile’s! Okay Ms. Robotress, … in falsetto, *“My… name… is Lucile… Jefferson.”*

 *“That … is … not… the … ‘voice’ … we … have … on … file … for … this … account. I … will … transfer … you … to … another … service … rep”.*

Hmmmn, don’t know if we like this nameless female computer. In 2001 Space Odyssey, the computer’s name was HAL, one letter ahead of IBM. If we go one better than HAL what do we do for the A? G?K maybe? Naw, … can’t even pronounce that. Nice initials though. Caller is finding it hard to keep a straight face and starts laughing. I can’t believe I’m playing word games with a computer. Maybe Rhonda Robot?

 Then, *“Hi, my name is Sala. How may I help you?”*

 Still laughing, *“I can’t make calls on my phone.”*

 *“Well what’s so funny about that?”*

 *“Nothing, I was just dueling with your computer, tried to imitate my wife’s voice and flunked.”*

 *“Oh, I thought you were laughing at the way I answered the phone.”*

 *“No way, … great to talk to a real person.”*

 Well, Sala took down the particulars of the complaint and said someone would be in touch with us first thing in the morning. And though for all we know she may be in India somewhere; true to her word a serviceman was at the door at 9:00 A.M. the next morning. In twenty minutes all phones were back in perfect working order. Lucile is very happy, and the above dueler is giving the above scenario much thought. Being an old de-bugger of financial software he is intrigued. How does one go about testing conversational software? Might it be a fun thing to do on rainy days. Reverse spam? Illegal? Let’s see.

Rhonda’s first question: Do you have you latest phone bill handy? How many ways are there to answer this and get to the next question?

 Yes. No. I do. I don’t. What does it look like? I don’t own a phone. We’re on auto pay. Can’t find latest, got last months.

Rhonda’s second: What is your phone number?

 Wide open field here, Just google “Rich and Famous” phone numbers, or perhaps see what response number 911 brings.

Rhonda’s third: Tell me your name. We suppose the name should have some relation to the number, but who knows. Try something.

Gee, … the possibilities are endless. In the interest of ambiguity, perhaps this should be done from a phone booth. Do they still have those things? Not too many huh? Must make it hard for Wonder Woman and Superman when they need to change clothes.

 Till next month,

 Lucile, Bailey & Ken.

 Reg. dist: 99.

P.S.

 In anticipation. Why didn’t we just have Lucile come to the phone?

 In answer. And miss all that fun?

Unrelated local news item:: *“Ottawa's great economy, low crime rate and steady population growth put the city back on top as the best place to live in Canada, according to rankings released Thursday by MoneySense magazine.”*

In wonder. How did they know we were back in town?