

We don't have television here at Coe Creek. Nor do we "stream" videos on our laptop. We get news via the internet, usually on our phone. But, entertainment? And learning? And information that is useful and interesting to us? That, in a way, has involved returning to an older time.

When I was little, we had no television here, either. In the evening, my dad would sit in an old Morris chair next to the big radio cabinet and listen to the news. After the news, there would be programs that we all enjoyed. The Jack Benny Show, the radio precursor to the popular TV series *Gunsmoke*, the comedy programs featuring a high school teacher called *Our Miss Brooks*, and the trials of the problem-beset water commissioner called *Gildersleeve*—these were common entertainment yet in the early 1950s. And in the daytime, if my mother were in the kitchen cooking, baking, or ironing, there were even a couple of what later became known as "soap operas" that she followed. I don't remember what they were about, but I know one was called *Hilltop House*. I have to admit, though, that I would run away and hide in a different room when the *Red Skelton* program was on. Nobody could convince me to listen to that superb comedian—I would not believe that the show was not about a red skeleton. That, I was sure, was much too frightening.

All that, of course, is in the distant past to even people older than I am, and young internet addicts can't even imagine such a world. But, in fact, there is a rather remarkable return to this sort of information and programming that we have found to be interesting, informative, educational, and entertaining.

In a way, we have gone back to old-time radio. But now, using only our phone and internet service, we hear from the wider world via what have come to be known as "podcasts."

So, where did that term even come from? Apparently, in 2004, Ben Hammersley, writing an article for *The Guardian* newspaper, coined the term, a combination of "iPod" and "broadcast." But, regardless of the origin of the name, the Podcast has provided us with more than the equivalent of the radio broadcasts of the pre-television era.

The podcast culture has flourished. Regardless of one's interests, political leanings, age, or any number of other factors, there are podcasts that are relevant. Many news and commentary programs that people can watch on television also are available in podcast form, though one sometimes must wait until the next day for that format. And, while there are services that one can use that have a cost, all kinds of podcasts are free. All that is required is a cell phone and access to internet service.

And, once in a while, when I am busy with some task that does not require much attention on my part, I find the podcasts of those old programs we listened to when I was a child—*Our Miss Brooks*, *The Great Gildersleeve*, *Fibber McGee and Molly*, or those programs that predated even my memory, such as *The Green Hornet* or *Philip Marlowe*.

I wonder if the Covid pandemic was a factor in the growing popularity of podcasts of these old radio programs. People spent much more time alone, and the "company" provided by these comedies and dramas would have become a valuable asset to more solitary living. And then, it became a routine that lasted when people once again became more involved with each other.

So, we have, in a way, come full circle—from radio to television to streaming video back to what is essentially radio, even if we use the term "podcast" today.

