

IT'S THAT TIME.AGAIN

(Today) Sunday, October 31, is the end of Daylight Saving Time for 2004, so we will have to re-set all of our clocks and watches. I am not looking forward to it.

To my astonishment I found last April, when I reset our clocks to Daylight Savings Time, that our house has a total of 24 clocks, and 6 watches which have to be re-set. It takes almost an hour to reset them all. The hour gained with Daylight Saving Time is lost immediately. What can we possibly need 30 time pieces for?

Well, we have three VCRs, two computers, two answering machines, a fax machine, two automobiles – one of which has TWO clocks in it), a microwave, a thermostat, and an oven. We can't really get rid of any of those clocks, but I suppose we could just ignore the time elements. It might sound strange when the answering machine dates a message from a long distance telemarketer at 3 am Sunday, but who cares? Yet suppose we neglect to check for messages, as we often do, and then we have a telephone conversation with someone about something important, and later pick up a recorded message from that person. It might be good to know if the message was before or after we talked.

Now when we want to record a TV program, which we do maybe three times a year, the VCR needs to be set for the right time. And it is getting hard at my age to remember which of the three clocks in the kitchen (VCR, oven, or microwave) is correct, if they show different times.

I suppose we could ignore the clocks in the car, because we always have watches on when we drive somewhere, and the clocks would be right half the year. But it might be disconcerting to a passenger. Of course the grandchildren let me know if the two clocks in the car disagree by a single minute. I don't think there is such a thing as a car that comes without a clock or two.

Then we have clocks in the three bedrooms, the downstairs hall, the living room (it is an antique Carriage Clock with a pendulum), and the guest bathroom. We have two alarm clocks in the master bedroom, plus two gift clocks that we don't know where else to put (my wife, Judy, gave me one, and I gave her the other).

The clock in the hall downstairs, a gift from son Frank, is made from an old ship's porthole. It is brass-plated, with a hinged heavy glass lens and threaded closing dogs, that frames the clock face. I couldn't get rid of that.

The two alarm clocks in the master bedroom are sort of just in case the power goes out. One of the clocks would stop if there were a power outage, and then continue running

from that point when the power came back on, so it would show the wrong time, while the one on the dresser would sit there and blink with 12:00 showing, so you would know the power had gone out. The one on the bed can't be read in the dark, but it has a nice wake-up sound. The one on the dresser is bright, with big numbers Judy and I can read without our glasses on. But it would be too bright by the bed.

Judy and I each have three wrist watches. One of mine doesn't keep very good time so I replaced it, but I kept the old one. You never know. The other one is a very fine Swiss watch Judy gave me as a wedding present. I only wear it when I put a suit on, which is getting rarer and rarer.

That makes a total of 28 clocks and watches. The 29th and 30th are in my office. I have a desk clock with a calendar, which I use all the time, and a wall clock behind my chair which I have to swivel around to see. Why do I need the wall clock? Well, it is a somewhat nostalgic thing, a battery operated reproduction of a big old school room wall clock. The minute hand gives a loud tick and jumps forward every second. It has an octagonal oak frame, large numerals, and ornate, Victorian-like hands. I would hate to get rid of that.

We have a 31st clock, too, but it is hidden in the closet. It is a birdsong clock that sounds a different bird call every hour. I've given several like it to grandchildren, who love them. Their parents don't, of course.

The one I gave to Granddaughter Alex, which has frog calls rather than bird songs, is in her bedroom; her paternal grandmother, Vicky, was visiting one day and lay down for a rest on Alex's bed. On the hour, the clock emitted a bullfrog mating call, and sent Vicky yelling down the hall. She thought the frog was in the bed.

If you are wondering what to give Judy or I for Christmas, it isn't a clock.

But, well, I've always wanted a grandfather's clock, or one that sounds naval bells, or . . .
. . .