

# Amazon Trail: Keeping It Simple

**S.A. FISHBURN**

{CUSTOM CABINETRY}

{AUTOCAD DESIGN}

{PLASTERING}

We bring years of experience and a passion for excellence to everything we do. Exact and professional, straight forward and honest, skilled and quietly confident. Call us for a consultation.

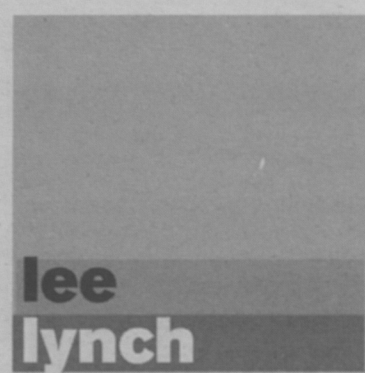
S.A. FISHBURN, INC.  
DANVILLE, VERMONT 05828  
802 684-2524  
fish@kingcon.com

**M**y cell phone makes calls out and receives calls. No games, SMS, voice memo Logos, graphics or predictive text input. It's probably got an address book, but I haven't figured out how to use it. The thought of seeing my girl on a tiny screen when I call her from the store to ask if we need bread or yogurt makes me feel a little overwhelmed by the Star Trekkiness of it all. What's next – will we be walking through holograms of spouses in the grocery aisles? Will kids in grocery carts be watching Schrek 23 on kiddie cell phones instead of shrieking at the checkout stands?

I remember being a bit scornful at my mother's inability to get with the program as electronic devices began to take over the world. When she died this year at age 96 she still hadn't a clue how my brother and I could talk to each other over the Internet, even though I once sat her down and had her send a message. What I am beginning to realize as I get older is that she probably didn't much give a hoot how the Internet worked. Or cell phones. Or even portable phones. There just comes a time when one wants to say, "Enough with the gadgets."

I mean, why would someone want to read a book on an electronic device? I don't think I'm being old-fashioned when I say that there isn't much in the way of inventions that can beat a printed paper book. What are they trying to improve on – is it too much effort to turn a page? Aren't books portable? Simple to use? Pleasant just the way they are? A really good book has a certain heft and smell to it that no plastic device can beat.

Then there are DVDs. Videos and VCRs are advanced enough for me. Movie theaters played their part in my adolescent love life, but now I'd rather hold hands with my girl on the couch in our living room. It's annoyingly hard to fast forward or reverse a DVD and if you do stop the disk it's often a struggle to start again from the same spot. I speak as an observer, however. I can't get past the remote control thingies. I remember when turning on the TV required walking across the room



to a big wooden console and rotating a dial. Now you have to be an ambidextrous, multitasking programming geek to operate the little box, or should I say, the flat panel, big screen, high-definition plasma video display.

It's not that I am trying to be curmudgeonly, but it's hard to imagine that all these gimmicks have a true value to anyone but the people who make money on them.

**I can't even read the face of a watch if it's also a digital compass-stopwatch-dual alarm with a flashing Indiglo beeping 200 lap chronograph – as advertised in Simple magazine.**

Wouldn't it be better to save all that money for the rainy day that's coming when the smartass in the White House decimates social security? I can't even read the face of a watch if it's also a digital compass-stopwatch-dual alarm with a flashing Indiglo beeping 200 lap chronograph – as advertised in Simple magazine.

What brought on this anti-widget attack was talking with a friend about her partner's battle with a combination digital camera-binocular. I remembered buying my digital camera, pretty sure it would mend my broken heart, resolve my financial problems, bring about world peace and maybe even be fun. I saw myself e-mailing pictures of my home and dramatic seascapes to faraway friends and family. I did not picture myself

spending hours balancing my laptop (another necessity) and the memory stick reader on my lap while trying to store digital treasures in cyber space, retrieve them, learn a photo program, crop, minimize and create folders – when I only wanted to snap and send.

I failed Digital Camera 101, and deposited the gadget in my already-full electronic toy drawer. That's not a little desk drawer, it's a big file-cabinet drawer full of Things I Will Fathom Some Day. Or have gotten bored with.

This week, though, the concrete pad was poured for my office. I was so excited that I retrieved the digital camera from its barren exile and snapped a couple of pictures of the drying cement, determined to e-mail them to my soon-to-be enthralled friends. Then I marched into the house, slipped the memory stick into the

reader, ignored the instruction manual, and when the bare bones photo program came up, I cropped, reduced and sent. Suddenly, it was so simple!

Maybe – could it be possible? – maybe I can learn to enter numbers into my cellular's address book. Maybe I just could learn to operate at least one remote control. But I draw the line at an Apple 4 GB Mini Pink iPod I just saw at amazon.com. At least, not in pink. ▼

*Copyright 2004 Lee Lynch. Lynch is the author of eleven books including The Swashbuckler and the Morton River Valley Trilogy. She lives on the Oregon Coast. Her web page is at <http://leelynch6.tripod.com>.*

**\* Hot times in the Cold Town! \***

City Market is having a **Tropical Day** in January!

January 22nd  
4-6 p.m.

Samples and Fun!

City Market has all the ingredients!

Your Community-Owned Grocery Store  
Open 7 am - 11 pm every day • 802-863-3659  
82 South Winooski Ave., Burlington www.citymarket.coop  
CatScratch, Knight & CCash Cards, EBT cards & manufacturers' coupons welcome!

**Conley Country**

FROM THE CONNECTICUT RIVER  
TO THE CANADIAN BORDER  
REAL ESTATE AND INSURANCE

179 Main Street \* Derby Vermont 05829  
phone (802) 766-2401 \* 800-243-2401  
fax 766-4731 \* e-mail: mick@realestatevermont.com

Log onto  
[www.realestatevermont.com](http://www.realestatevermont.com)  
to view our current listings.