

# Rumours

by BRIAN LOCKHART

There was a time when the year 2000 was considered a futuristic date. For some reason, that number represented a time when science and technology would be so advanced that life would be very much different.

After all, the Space Family Robinson blasted off in the Jupiter II in 1997, and at the time, that date was considered well into the future.

Pretty much none of what was expected to happen ever happened. We don't have flying cars like the Jetsons, and no cities are encased in a giant glass dome.

Televisions have become much larger, thinner, and have better resolution, so that's a bonus.

Except for digital technology, life as we know it is just about the same as it was.

However, as the year 2000 approached, media reports started telling the public that there was a looming threat that computer scientists and engineers had missed when designing and building all this new digital technology.

Someone theorized that since computers were designed to recognize two numbers as a year, computers were going to have an issue when the calendar moved into the new millennium.

The theory was that computers would recognize '98' as '1998', however, they would not understand or recognize '00' as a year, and possibly interpret those digits as 1900.

The looming situation became known as Y2K, and there was general concern worldwide that anything with a computer chip or digital clock would simply shut down when the clock clicked over to '00.

Hey, doesn't your car have computer chips? What about your TV, your digital alarm clock, and some of your kitchen appliances?

Will you wake up on January 1, 2000, to find your computer has had a catastrophic failure and has lost all of your valuable data? Maybe our car won't start because the computer chips failed?

Companies with a reliance on computer technology, especially banks, began scrambling for a fix.

A lot of people were very worried.

Then ? nothing. Somehow, the computers all knew that the number that comes after 1999 is 2000.

Crisis averted. Everyone's car started in the morning, and automatic coffee makers started brewing java at 7 a.m.

When the COVID pandemic became well-known in 2020, no one really knew what to expect at first.

The government, rather quickly, announced that many businesses must close. Many others were severely restricted in how they could operate.

It was quickly becoming a crisis situation ? especially for people like restaurant owners or business owners whose functions included human contact.

Thankfully, thanks to the wisdom and apparent reliance on alcohol by those at Queen's Park, liquor stores remained open, and shelves were fully stocked.

For some reason, the pandemic resulted in a rumour that there was going to be a massive toilet paper shortage.

For those with common sense, they thought, why would a pandemic cause a toilet paper shortage?

It didn't matter. Some people believed the rumour and started buying as much as they could.

I recall standing in the checkout line at the grocery store, next to a woman who had two full shopping carts of toilet paper.

She looked angry and refused to make eye contact with anyone, because she knew her selfishness meant someone else could not buy the product, as she had cleaned out the shelves.

There never was a toilet paper shortage. Everyone got what they needed.

During the 1970s, several credible media sources said scientists were predicting that the earth was heading for a new ice age, and had the date to prove it.

That was a little worrying for people who prefer beach weather.

The ice age didn't happen.

A couple of decades later, it was predicted, again using scientific data, that due to global warming, coastal cities like New York would be going underwater by 2005.

Some people actually moved further inland to avoid the coming catastrophic floods.

Yet people have recently been posting duplicate photos of cities and ocean-side landmarks taken over 100 years apart, showing that sea levels in 1900 were exactly the same as they are now.

One religious denomination, over the years, has predicted several times the end of the world as we know it.

These predictions resulted in cult member selling their possession, failing to obtain insurance policies, and not pursuing post-secondary education. After all, why would you need a degree if you're going to be in heaven by midnight next Tuesday?

The predictions, of course, all failed.

There will always be rumours, and rumours of rumours.

Sometimes you just have to let the chips fall where they may, and get on with life without worrying about what may or may not happen.