

# 20,000 Leagues to Dearborn, MI

Give or take a few leagues.

Last weekend, Sunday to be exact, I was attending my first Steampunk convention. To explain what this is, I tried to come up with all sorts of analogies. The best I could come up with is to think of Disney's 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea. From the time they board the Nautilus, the movie turns to what is now known as steampunk. Other movies of this genre are League of Extraordinary Gentlemen and Frankenstein. All of the Victorian era clothing, marked by advanced inventions powered by steam or clockworks.

I was thrilled to spend the day with my oldest daughter, her husband and my lovely step-granddaughter. I was able to pick up some steampunk garb and blend into the convention a little more than my jeans and t-shirt allowed. I know I will wear the coat more when the weather is appropriate.

Now, I have been asked why I would want to do anything of this sort. Easy answer, it was a lot of fun. Going to the events themselves is an eye opening experience, going in "garb" makes it a total immersion. I know I will never get to the point of digging local garage sales and flea markets for pieces of brass, but the theater nut in me will complete at least one set of clothing to wear next year.

It was a step out of my usual comfort zone. And I enjoyed myself that day. Maybe next year a comic book convention. I always wanted to be a super hero, or villain.

---

# What, why can't I do that?

Ok, I understand that I don't know all the ins and outs of iTunes yet, but why isn't it easier to unsync from one computer and then sync to another.

The syncing part is very easy. Unfortunately, I was not on my computer when I first installed the software needed to run the iPad. When I got back on to run a software update (that was quick), my iPad automatically synced itself with my daughter's computer.

Now I want to move that information to my desktop. Oops, the iPad is already synced with another computer.. OK, go back to that one and unsync.. I did not see an option to do that.

N000! I have to transfer the stuff to the new computer, and then take the iPad back to Mfg default, and then re-install my purchased/free apps. Hmm. That doesn't copy some PDFs I had placed in the iTunes on the laptop. Why not? I can understand licensing issues. You don't want to have stuff accessible on multiple computers. I get that. But why not have a command to de-sync the mobile device, and then allow the data on that device to be synced with another computer.

Oh well, I'm just glad I found this out before I got too much stuff on the iPad. More of a nuisance than any real problem. Hmmm, I guess this may be the only apple device I get....

---

## I feel like I crossed a line

Last week the price of the initial version of the iPad were dropped by \$100. I went out and bought one.

Initially, I was looking for something to read some manuals for work. My nook just wasn't up to that task. Then I found an app that just may help me to put my thoughts down without wasting lots of paper or post-its. So far I've found many things I like to do with this little device. It is almost too fun.

The iPad has replaced my droid for quick checks of the weather, and quick games of angry birds. It replaced my laptop for email checking and looking up blog post or other social networks. On some books, it even replaced my nook!!

I know I will still use some sort of PC for things requiring a computer. The screen size and speed are lacking on the iPad for some applications. I also need storage for the iPad. I can envision a time when I will be moving things around to get what I need for a day or week.

Of course, this won't replace my android phone, too big to carry around all the time. My nook is my favorite electronic means of reading books. But I can use this to watch movies during a trip. I can send off a quick email or two. I can post a blog update. I can check on sport scores and news. I have found uses for it and I just like using it.

Good points to this are many, but there are also some things that limit the device. I still have issues with some of them.

1) You must have a windows or Mac PC to even start running the thing. An iTunes account is needed just to start it. As far as I could determine iTunes is not available on my Linux machines. That almost made me take the thing back.

2) To be more useful it needs a keyboard. That limits the portability. The touch screen keyboard works, but it takes up valuable screen space. And you can't touch type.

3) For the same reason I stayed away from iTunes, I have a small problem with this device. It is too easy to make a bunch of small purchases that add up quickly. \$0.99 seems like such

a small price, but it could add up.

4) It still seems expensive for what it does. I realize you are paying for the small size and apple name, but I feel the cost is a bit on the high side. This is what you will have when there is really no close competition from any other slate type devices. Apple found their niche and made it their own.

All that said, it is still a fun little device. I'm sure that I will find many more uses for it.

---

## **And the fog rolled in...**

Tonight/this morning I was ready to sit in my lawn chair and look for shooting stars. The Perseid meteor shower was to hit its maximum two days. The sky promised to be clear. The mosquitoes did not promise to stay away, but I have my bug suit. □ So, I drove the truck out into the field, had my chair sitting in the bed, and I watched the night sky.

I saw a couple of shooting stars, but no storm/shower. Kind of a sprinkle. I had a grand view of the summer stars. The sky was dark enough to see the Milky Way. For an hour I enjoyed kicking back and just watching the sky turn.

Then I noticed some of the horizon stars were not as bright as they had been. Passing clouds I thought, not a big deal. Then I noticed more and more of the stars were just that much harder to see. Dang too many clouds except I stood up and the sky was clear once again. The cloud had formed much lower as fog around my truck. I stood for a while in hopes to see one or two more meteors, but within 15 minutes the fog was at my head. No more star gazing.

I should have guessed with the heavy rain this afternoon, and

the warm temperatures today that fog would form easily. I just wish it would have held out for an hour or two. I'm sure I could drive one way or another to get out of my little fog bank, but the bed and work are calling me. Maybe tomorrow will be better.

---

## Early morning

I woke up a little before my alarm this morning. Wide awake at 4:00 am. I realize this is because I went to sleep much earlier than normal, but still that was an hour of sleep I could have used. ☐

Oh well.

Hard drive restore is going slowly, but is making progress. So far I've been able to restore 1 partition from the drive and I'm working on reading data off of the primary partition. It looks like all of my recent additions are completely corrupted. That just means more time spent doing what was just finished. So much for digitizing my CD collection.

I think, but I'm not positive yet, that I will be able to get most of the important stuff restored. The drive itself is on its last legs, so I'm not sure how long it will keep spinning. Most of the restore software I've been able to get my hands on are telling me the same thing. The drive is failing, and I should back it up. Unfortunately, the drive is failing and doesn't like being 'backed up'. Different software does allow me to restore different parts of the drive, so that is a plus.

For those interested, I'm now using some restore utilities on Ubuntu Linux to access the drive. After this is done, I'll mount the drive in an external bay and see if Windows will see

it better. It may take some time before the Linux is finished, because it stops when it doesn't fix/copy a file. The more problems it runs up against, the more it stops. Unfortunately, when I am at work I can't hit the button to make it continue. It does try to do multiple reads before saying it can't copy it, so that is a plus. It also does a file compare after the check, to make sure it was a clean copy. That just takes forever when the drive being copied is failing.

Since I woke up early, I was able to continue the process 10 times, for files that could not be copied. Every one of those was something I can live without. I just have to wait until it is done before I can see what I got back.

---

## **I should know better...**

Why didn't I back this drive up? I know it was the old machine. I didn't really do that much on it. Surf the web, write a blog, catch up on a ball game. No I didn't do much on this machine.

The hard drive crashed/failed. I think I will be able to get some of the pictures that were on this machine. I think I have duplicates of all of them, but I'm not sure yet. My daughters did their homework on this machine, and I think all the old reports are toast.

Some recent pictures that I took with the phone are gone. A new e-book list, vanished. Software updates poof. Some music became an electronic ghost.

Hmm... I do have another hard drive I can drop in this machine. I think I know where the windows install disk is. Maybe I can get the machine functioning again. I may drop in some other

operating system. Who knows.

Then there is one other loss. I've never used it. It was there like a memorial for the past 6.5 years. Kept when I upgraded the computer. Disk imaged over when I got this drive. Gone are some web bookmarks. Little used since 2003, simply marked "Sarah's Favorites".

---

## **Another High Tech adventure!**

What is it with me and high tech toys recently? I bought myself a book reader (read the many nook posts.) ☐ and now I have a new 'smart' phone.

All I really ever wanted in a phone was the ability to make phone calls. You know, dial the number, the phone rings and someone on the other end picks it up. Then you have a conversation until it is finished. You hang up and that is the end of it until the next call.

My first journey into the cell phone age occurred just a few short years ago. I thought I would get a cell phone for the two oldest daughters at home just in case they needed to get in contact with me. Little did I know that the the oldest of the two already bought a cell phone. So the extra went to the youngest. I thought that at 13 she was a little young to have a phone, but I did not want it to go to waste. I had that 2 year contract and all.

Just a little over 2 years later, my original cell phone would no longer hold a charge. So I went back to get another. I found out that there were no cell phone 'deals' on any phones that just made calls. They all had things like cameras, the ability to play music or even download news. Hmm. All I wanted

to do was make phone calls. I got an inexpensive phone that did come with a camera, but I don't think I ever took more than 5 to 10 pictures with it. I did use the phone part.

That brings us to late last week. Again just a little over 2 years have gone by since the last cell phone adventure. Everybody is now carrying around a 'smart' phone. These things can take good pictures. You can access your email. You can access the internet. You can even access your blog or other social outlet. There are even games to play on the phone. You might say you are carrying around a little computer that just happens to make phone calls.

Because of some updates to things at work, I was looking at these new smart phones. One of them would allow me to stay connected if I ever had the need. Since I could see a benefit to this, I was casually looking at new smart phones. The cost was a bit much, but I could see myself getting one at some point in the future. No big deal, my phone was working well, and I liked it.

Then came the fateful day that my cell phone died. It would no longer dial numbers. It would no longer turn on or off. It was almost less than a phone. I could still receive calls, and because of the lucky fact that I had the blue tooth turned on, I could make calls using voice commands. But I could see that it was not going to be a good way to go. The voice commands were (and still are) a bit inconvenient at times. Some of my contact names are very similar to others on the list. The voice calling would sometimes miss the actual person I wanted to call. So I took the phone in to see if they could revive it.

To make an already long story shorter, the phone was dead (and it would cost more than a new phone to fix it). I am now the proud or not so proud owner of a new 'Droid' phone. It plays games. It accesses my email. It post to my blog (if I had teeny-tiny fingers). It can take pictures. It can load videos.



It help me when I'm lost. It can play music. It will even store books. And it even makes phone calls!

I'm not exactly sure about all of the features, but I may get used to them.

---

## More iPad thoughts

I was going to combine this with my last post on the iPad, but I thought that the initial thoughts could stay there without further editing.

Things I wanted to try, but couldn't.

1) I was wondering if you could play music while doing other things. There was no music on the iPad, and I don't have an itunes account, so I don't know.

2) New and different apps... See above. I guess if I really want to play with one, I need an itunes account. I don't really like that, but I guess it keeps the device safe from most viruses.

3) Needed to load an app to get to MLB.com stuff. No flash video on these devices. And the Tigers were winning. Listening to the ball game on this would have been fun.

Things I liked

1) Quick responsive touch screen. Fairly easy to type on the screen. I did have to look at what I was typing. I haven't had to do that in years. That would set back my typing habits.

2) Screen was clear and very legible. I do like the instant enlarge and shrink feature of the touch screen.

3) Hey, I could use it in the dark.... Could have been an e-book reader for me, but then....

Things I didn't like:

1) Fingerprints. Touch screens and finger prints go hand in hand. Really nice display messed up by finger prints.

2) No Flash. I can understand why Apple doesn't want it, but not everybody is ready for new web videos. No MLB.com

3) No, I would not buy this to be an e-reader. It does have a back-lit screen and after a while I noticed it was harder on my eyes.

How would I use one? Would I use one?

Well I was actually thinking of many ways that this could be used. The astronomy software just jumped out at me. With that I was thinking of how easy it would be to load this with the proper software and take things with me. It is easier to carry than a laptop so the portability is great. The screen is bigger than the iPod, iPhone and other devices of that type, so it is easier on this old guys eyes. The iPad is built for sharing things. Use it to take notes, load it with things you are working on. Take it over to a coworkers desk or a meeting room. For my job it would be extremely useful.

That being said, I don't need it. The iPad isn't jumping out at me like the e-book readers did. I could walk into an electronics store and not have an urge to buy one. I would use one if it was given to me, and use it often, but I think there it stops.

---

# Quick Post on an iPad

I am getting to borrow an iPad from work this evening. Very easy to use, but touch typing on a touch screen makes me look at my hands.

This one has a cool astronomy program that I will try out if it is clear tonight. I will have to be on the lookout for the new pad computers when they arrive on the market.

More later...

---

## I didn't mean to use that much

I made chicken for dinner and thought that it would taste good with some salsa on it. It did, but I put on a bit much. Now I'm paying for it. Up late at night waiting for antacids to kick in. You can't put it back in the jar after it hits partially cooked chicken. And it was the good stuff too, lots of heat.

Ahh, the joys of aging. I still like all the spicy stuff, but it doesn't like me as much as it used to. The cast iron stomach seems to have some rust.

On another note, I miss my laptop. Even though I got the tower up and running again, it was so easy to have the laptop with me wherever I wanted to be. I have an old machine going, but it is very, very, very slow. I think it is slower than my internet connection. I do have it loaded with a full version of Ubuntu Linux at this time, maybe that is pushing it a bit.

I wonder if it would work with the netbook version of that OS. I may have to try it and find out. I need to get a list of USB or other wireless cards that work with Ubuntu or Puppy Linux. I have two old laptops that I have installed Linux on and only 1 wireless card that works. The newer of the two laptops has an internal wireless, but Linux doesn't like that one either. I even tried a backdoor way that was supposed to allow the use of the windows drivers. No go. I guess for now I share. [I really can't use two laptops at once can I?](#)