

## **A day in hell with Apple**

I'm guessing all of you have a cellphone. How could you not.

Think back to last century when newspaper full-page adverts declared the world was about to change in ways we could never imagine - the newest cell phones would offer communication possibilities beyond our ken.

What it's led to is endless frustration for older people like me. I had some this week, a day of hell with Apple.

It began nicely enough a few weeks ago when I bought the latest iPhone. For work. I had been using a Samsung, a difficult experience because while the camera was superior to anything I had ever owned, the phone was user-unfriendly.

The camera in the new iPhone has almost caught up to the older Samsung, but not quite. Some photos taken with the telephoto lens are poor quality. But overall it still matches my Nikon camera gear and is a lot easier to carry around.

My hellish day was seeded by the proposition that you can dispense with PIN numbers when opening your phone and go for face recognition instead.

It's not something you set up in public, requiring as it does a weird performance of swivelling your head around in circles while the phone tracks your unique features. The big mistake I made was doing it with my cap on.

One morning when I tried to open the phone I forgot the cap - so I wasn't me. The phone demanded a PIN code.

While changing to face recognition, I had to change my old PIN because the phone said it ended with too many 1s. That was a legacy from a previous time when Apple moved from four-digit pins to six-digit ones.

I was told to add a couple of letters. I did, but in the excitement (if that's the right word) of better acquainting myself with an inanimate object with such apparent intelligence I forgot to write the new PIN down on old-fashioned paper.

I guessed it. "You have three more attempts remaining," said the phone. After three futile efforts, the phone said it would disable itself for a minute. After said minute, failure again.

I was given another minute to wait. Then it grew to three minutes. Then 10, 15, an hour. My day started to slip away.

I connected the phone to my PC and looked up the Apple internet help page, which described - badly in my unworthy opinion - the way to fix my lockout. It didn't work.

Thinking it was probably because Apple and Microsoft hate one another, I asked Lin to try on her Apple Mac. She did, but all she got was a constant message that the phone was searching for data, which it couldn't find, apparently, because the search went on and on.

As each hour passed, we tried to guess the PIN. Thank heavens the disabled period is still only an hour, I thought. I feared further algorithmic increases until our wait became days, weeks, years.

REPLACEMENT JT col for Aug 22 2020 - a day in hell

I went online and after a long series of circuitous bypasses and avoiding Apple attempts to sell me things I don't need, I arrived at that wonderful option, the chat.

My first Apple chat partner was a robot, which gave up quickly.

Then I got a person, located somewhere in the world I could only guess at. Her name was English, but it might be xenophobic to speculate further.

After I explained, she suggested a few fixes, none of which worked. She excused herself to consult with a senior colleague. That's the last I heard from her.

Numbers two and three chatters got no further. Worse, one had me trying to download iTunes again, even though we already had the latest version.

Finally, after nearly 12 hours from the time I first attempted to open my iPhone, I got Scott. He fixed it in a click or two.

I understand why Apple and similar digital behemoths are making it harder to break into things; it's a hidden cost of hacking.

My failure to wear my cap may not have had anything to do with what happened, of course, but I'm not taking any chances. Future scans of my physiognomy will include one of me wearing a Covid mask with "Jim" written across it.

Apple, you ain't going to forget me again.