

It's a few days before Christmas and something is seriously wrong with my cell phone, a replacement I've owned for less than a week. I'm beginning to suspect the entire series is defective. Without my amplifying device I can't understand incoming callers at all, but regardless of the device, my listeners can't understand what I am trying to say. Confusingly, there are times when the phone functions ok.

It works fine through Bluetooth while I drive. It happens, that's when I do most of my talking, so it's been difficult to pinpoint what's wrong. Also the previous phone often worked ok in other locations—California, Texas, Cheyenne. At first I thought it was my home on the prairie that caused the interference, yet visitors have had no trouble making or receiving calls from my home. For a while I imagined my hearing was compromised despite the hearing aid, so I purchased an amplifying device called “streamer.” It helped for a while. Recently, however, even the streamer has deserted me; plus, my conversation partners have trouble understanding what I'm trying to say on the phone. I finally convinced the company that the phone was defective and received a replacement, an LG Premier LTE (LG62V) on December 16.

I could not get it to work at all. Luckily a techie son was on visit (along with his brother & friends; all were hunting pronghorn on my place plus the Wests and Graves ranches). We were having a late lunch when we were treated to a ninety-minute spectacle of Frank trying to reconnect my cell phone to my number and to reinstate service—in spite of the assistant's assurance the week before that they would not terminate service and I could pick up with the new phone where I left off, this proved not to be the case. Two days later, while setting up voice mail I discovered that the new phone is just as unreliable as the one it replaced.

I had bought the prior one last year in anticipation of my cousin's visit; until then I owned a simple one. This I upgraded to avail myself of GPS capability. Looking back I remember instances where the GPS misdirected us (while driving in St. George, UT, for example). Later it did the same when Walt and I were returning from West Texas: my GPS added a detour of 30 minutes, which we had to correct via hard-copy map. Last October it misled me after Frank had programmed my route to Andy's house. Although I'd driven the route before, I wanted to be guided through the increasing Sacramento traffic, not to mention nighttime driving. The GPS barraged me with so many confusing instructions, Andy had to guide me by phone conversation. Next morning we discovered the GPS was set to “walking,” which may have been due to human error though I don't know how it could have happened.

Now the latest development. For the next few days I won't be able to make or receive calls at all. Bad SIM card. The company is sending a replacement—wouldn't let me go to the dealer for one—but it'll take up to a week. This means no calls on Christmas Day or yet before or after. Will a replacement SIM solve the problem? I doubt it. Until yesterday I could make phone calls although, as the day progressed, the calls became progressively truncated. I made two business calls; each time the recipient said she could not “hear” me. When I dialed again, the conversation was clear. **Half an hour later, when I called a bank and was put on hold, the call dropped.** Finally I went to rancher neighbors and used their phone to call the company.

I used to think LG was a subsidiary of Samsung but LG (“Life's Good”) is a company all its own. The dealer recently confided he gets frequent complaints about LG models. (Apparently his

staff did not know this, for they recommended it at the time of my purchase.) He suggested I get a Samsung. When I mentioned this to another neighbor whose phone I've used to complain about mine, she urged me to stay away from Samsung. Certain Samsung models, she said, catch fire in airline cabins and have been banned by the FAA. I googled about it and found a number of instances last year, on Southwest Airlines and Delta. Imagine traveling on business and having your cellphone confiscated at the airport scanner—it makes my phone woes look like small change. The Google search revealed instances of some iPhones catching fire early this year.

Three to 5 inches of snow is expected in my area. I may not be able to drive into Cheyenne on Sunday, go to church & call family from a friend's phone. I've seen better days—though, come to think of it, while living in Cheyenne I had trouble with a landline also. The marvels of technology!