

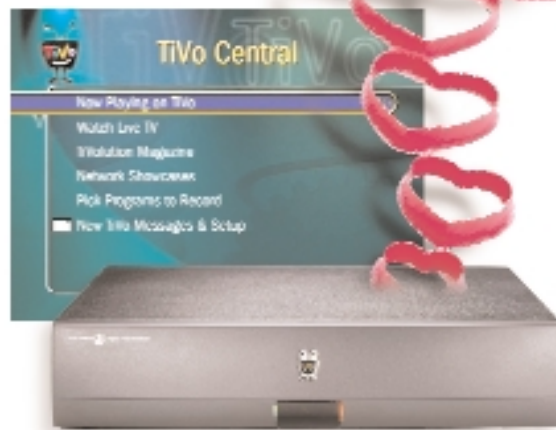
My life irrevocably changed almost seven years ago, when I gave birth to my son. Even though I had read *What to Expect when You're Expecting* and talked to other women about their experiences, nothing truly prepared me for the emotional transformation that motherhood brought. I have fallen in love with my son in a thousand different ways, shed both tears of joy and tears of frustration, burned up the telephone lines sharing news of each new accomplishment, and experienced an almost constant sense of wonder at his unique perfection. Until last Christmas, I truly believed that nothing could ever remotely duplicate my feelings of rapture toward my child. Then TiVo entered my life.

I couldn't imagine what lay beneath the wrapping paper of the heavy gift. But when the contents of the package were revealed, I swooned. I had received a TiVo—my very own TiVo. I'd been following the rise of TiVo through the popular media, and my imagination was captivated by thoughts of being able to pause live TV, of being freed from cumbersome VCR tapes and of having a device that could anticipate my interests and record shows it thought I might like. My fascination with TiVo struck those closest to me as odd, since I was far from being a TV junkie. Sure, I'd tape *The West Wing*, *60 Minutes*, *The Practice* and *ER*, but that was the extent of my viewing habit. Indeed, I considered the medium to be the bane of our society, encouraging people to replace critical thinking with passive consumption. What a fool I was!

Initially, I had to juggle my priorities. I'd been anticipating buying a new bed to replace the sagging mattress I'd been sleeping on. But how could I ever sleep well at night knowing that my state-of-the-art TiVo had to settle for a 12-year-old television set? No, the new bed could wait so my TiVo could enjoy a flat-screen TV. After all, when you're a mom, you have to make sacrifices.

Once TiVo was nestled comfortably in its new home and I'd subscribed to the monthly service, I paced the room anxiously as I waited for the programming to download from the telephone line. Yes, I was witnessing the birth of a new technology right in my own living room.

I delighted in every aspect of my new



FAMILY VALUES

CONFESSIONS OF A TIVO ADDICT

By SALLY E. SMITH

baby. I couldn't wait to call my best friend and brag that, when I fast-forwarded through commercials and hit "play" a few frames after the program returned, TiVo was so smart that it backed up a few seconds to compensate for my reaction time. The perfection of TiVo's remote control—its shape and weight is one of the great engineering accomplishments of our time - was an endless source of delight. I spent countless hours cooing over my beautiful TiVo, but I was equally committed to its education. I diligently went through the title list, giving various shows between one and three "thumb's up" or "thumb's down," so that TiVo could learn my viewing preferences. I am fascinated by anything having to do with the presidency, so the day it chose to record a program on the history of Air Force One, I felt like TiVo had uttered its first words. When *The West Wing* was bumped from 9:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and TiVo recorded it at the proper time, it was as though TiVo had aced its first test.

That's not to say, of course, that TiVo is the perfect child. Its foibles were apparent at this year's Academy Awards, when the show went over its allotted time and TiVo cut off the recording. It went into its own version of a time

out, making me miss Halle Berry's and Denzel Washington's acceptance speeches. But in the months that followed, I learned about the manual recording option, so we were covered by the time the Emmy's rolled around this fall.

I was devastated early this summer, when TiVo had a major health crisis. Over the course of a few days, as the picture on the screen became pixilated and jerky,

my anxiety built. I was initially in denial, but, as I saw TiVo's life slipping away, I made an emergency call to Sony, the manufacturer. We determined that its disc drive was kaput, and, reminiscent of the managed health care system, Sony told me that I would have to ship my baby to Massachusetts for—horrors!—two to four weeks so its drive could be replaced.

I moped around the house, devastated. The wonders that TiVo had revealed—*Trading Spaces*, *Behind Closed Doors* with Joan Lunden, *Crossing Jordan*—had been ripped from me. Concerned about my mental health, my best friend called me each morning to see how I was holding up. Luckily, before I could send my baby away, another friend discovered an online company, www.weaknees.com, which was a virtual emergency room for TiVo. The folks at weaknees were people who truly understood family values. (Their site FAQ states that they chose the name "because we were looking for a name that would, in a word, express the feeling that TiVo users get when they first start using a TiVo. We think you'll be amazed by TiVo and, frankly, weak in the knees.") I emailed them about a replacement drive, and received an email back within a few minutes saying they were willing to overnight a replacement disc for Saturday delivery. Thanks to the help of a friend who removed the old drive and installed the new, bigger drive with surgical precision, TiVo recovered beautifully, and life, once again, looked bright.

Luckily for me, there has been no sibling rivalry in our family. Indeed, my son has embraced TiVo, and TiVo consistently records shows that it thinks my son might enjoy. TiVo knows the joy it has brought to our lives, and doesn't seem to be bothered by the knowledge that my son comes first in my heart. It knows that I never take it for granted, and that, almost a year later, TiVo continues to enrapture me. ♦