



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Inventor of First Mobile Phone Looks back, Thinks about Future

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The man who made the first call from a wireless phone is now 94 years old.

The year was 1973. Martin Cooper operated a large, heavy new communication device on a street in New York City. The device was not physically connected to phone lines. But, Cooper was able to make use of it --- he called a technology business competitor.

Fifty years later, the inventor says he hopes wireless phones can make life better but he also expresses some worries.

“My most **negative** opinion is that we don’t have any privacy anymore because everything about us is now recorded someplace,” Cooper said.

And, he says he is concerned about how easily young people can link to harmful online material on their cell phones.

Cooper spoke with the Associated Press from Barcelona, Spain, where he attended the Mobile World Congress, the biggest telecom industry trade show. Cooper received an award there for his lifetime of work.

Cooper says he is an **optimist**. He believes the technology’s best days may still be ahead in areas such as education and health care.

“Between the cellphone and medical technology and the internet, we are going to **conquer** disease,” he said Monday, at the MWC.

Cooper was working for Motorola when he used the Dyna-Tac phone to make a call in April 1973. Things have changed greatly since then.

But, he said, “we had no way of knowing this was the historic moment.”

Cooper said there are still ways for the mobile phone to change. The first one he used weighed over 1 kilogram. Today, they are small. But he thinks one day, they will be more like a part of our body than something we hold.

He said perhaps the human body can even power the phones.

“The human body is the charging station, right,” he asked. The body makes energy from food, he argues, so it could possibly also power a phone. Instead of holding the phone in the hand, for example, the device could be placed under the skin.

Cooper said he also hopes there can be more protection for internet users concerned about privacy and for children.

Speaking about privacy concerns, he said: “it’s going to get resolved, but not easily.”

He also said there should be a special internet for children so they do not run into material made for adults.

Cooper said the idea for the mobile phone came from a communication device used by the **comic book** character Dick Tracy. The imaginary detective had a **wristwatch** from which he could make phone calls.

I’m Dan Friedell.

Dan Friedell adapted this story for VOA Learning English based on a report by the Associated Press.

Words in This Story

negative *-adj.* centered on what is bad or unhelpful

optimist -*n.* a person who is inclined to be hopeful and to expect good outcomes

conquer -*v.* defeat

comic book -*n.* a magazine that contains stories told in pictures mostly.

wristwatch -*n.* an electronic timekeeping piece worn on the arm near the hand.

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