

## Small wonders



CNS Photos courtesy of Motorola and Sharp

For the newest technology you can hold right in your hand, check out the Motorola Ojo Personal Video Phone or the Sharp Wizard Personal Organizer — besides the usual functions, it will help you keep track of your diet and exercise.

### Latest electronics put the world in your pocket

BY PAUL L. HUARD  
Copley News Service

That is not a Christmas carol you hear playing at your neighborhood consumer electronics store. It is the march of technology as retailers once again offer the latest gadgets just in time for the holiday season.

Merchants are banking on the "ka-CHING!" of cash registers to accompany the sales of products that take advantage of "smarter" chips in all manner of devices from high-definition televisions (HDTV) to cell phones.

The 2003 Christmas season produced some outstanding successes, according to Trendwatching.com, a Web site that follows and evaluates trends including consumer patterns.

Expensive plasma and LCD products such as top-end widescreen TVs did well, as did expensive stereo equipment.

However, the surprise Christmas hit was digital photography equipment and accessories. With most American households owning powerful desktop computers and the interest in plugging a digital camera into a PC is growing rapidly, this Christmas will probably be no different.

Products that will be in stores soon reflect these trends.

■ The Motorola Ojo Personal Video Phone (\$700) enables face-to-face conversations over a broadband network, complete with full-motion video and high-quality audio. (The name, by the way, rhymes with "mojo" — like Austin Power's power.)

Part of Motorola's "connected home" product line, the Ojo produces pictures and sound that are true-to-life, without any of the breakup and distortion normally associated with video phones. The wireless display unit houses a high-resolution LCD display, state-

of-the-art miniature camera and advanced speaker-phone technology that Motorola says will create "a richer, more personal exchange."

The Franklin Electronic Publishers Speaking Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th Edition (\$119.99) is a frugal choice for budget shoppers who want a practical device for student or professional use.

Completely updated and redesigned, the electronic dictionary has new content and design for ease-of-use as a hand-held device.

Designed to help you communicate effectively, it combines high-quality language reference with high-tech search technology, providing instant access to more than 200,000 words and 500,000 synonyms.

■ Make up for extra holiday calories with Sharp's Wizard Personal Organizer (\$39.99). Designed for today's active lifestyle, the Wizard offers built-in data tracking of daily nutritional intake.

The Wizard makes it easy for the health-conscious person to count the calories, total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrates, dietary fiber, sugars and protein of more than 800 foods. It also functions as a pedometer that automatically counts the number of steps taken throughout the day and calculates the total calories burned.

■ Casio's QV-R61 digital camera (\$399.99) is especially designed for novice users. While its 6 megapixels and 3x optical zoom lens deliver professional-quality image resolution, the 2-inch LCD screen helps out new photographers by displaying pop-ups that explain different functions and photographic options.

Its high-performance features include a start-up time of 1 second and a release time lag of 0.01 second, thanks to its high-speed processing engine. The camera uses AA alkaline or lithium batteries and takes up to 280 still images on a single battery charge. This newest QV model weighs in at just less than 6 ounces.

## How much do you know about Santa's most loyal friends?



CNS Photo

Known today as the helpers that get Santa around the world to deliver gifts, reindeer are believed to be among the first domesticated animals.

BY SCOTT HILYARD  
Copley News Service

John Tobias knows reindeer can fly. "I know because I've flown with them before," said Tobias, director of the Miller Park Zoo in Bloomington, Ill.

That either makes Tobias Santa Claus or delusional. Or maybe there's another explanation.

"I actually flew with a couple of reindeer from Anchorage, Alaska, to Minnesota," he said. "Of course, they were on an airplane. In crates. Heading to the zoo where I used to work."

As average American residents of the 48 contiguous United States, we think about reindeer approximately three times a year (less often in Hawaii, more in Alaska) — at the end of the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade, the evening the animated Rudolph runs on network television and on Christmas Eve while reading "'Twas the Night Before Christmas" to the kiddies and putting carrots out for Santa's crew to nibble on.

Which rushes us immediately to the most critical, and perhaps only, fact about reindeer you need to know: Reindeer don't like carrots.

So if you really want to reward a reindeer for flying to your house, leave edible mushrooms, lichens or other Arctic vegetation next to Santa's cookies and milk (or merlot and brie, depending on the neighborhood). That's what they eat in the wild.

Reindeer are caribou with a better, more aggressive public relations department. There are six different types of caribou in

North America, according to Robert Robel, a Kansas State University professor of environmental biology, but the one that they normally consider reindeer is a small caribou that lives in the Lapland area of the northern Scandinavian countries, where Finland, Sweden and Norway come together.

Reindeer run in herds in Alaska and live on reindeer farms throughout the United States. They are believed to be among the first domesticated animals, herded in northern Europe and Asia 2,000 years ago by a native people who were once called Laplanders (mostly by people who had never been within half a planet of Lapland, or northern Scandinavia) but are commonly called Sami.

The economy of Sami communities is mainly based on reindeer farming, fishing, hunting and handicraft, according to <http://scandinavia.com>. The Sami language has 400 words for reindeer, and precisely one word that has wriggled its way into common use in the English language: tundra.

"I find reindeer fascinating," Tobias said. "They display perfect adaptation to their Arctic environment."

For instance, reindeer have unique hair that traps air and provides excellent insulation — similar to the way down insulates geese, according to Mazuri, a company that makes food products for exotic animals. The hair also keeps them buoyant and enables them to swim across wide rushing rivers.

"The fur provides them with so much insulation that they can actually lay down in the snow and their body

heat won't melt the snow. In fact, they won't even get wet," Tobias said.

Both male and female reindeer grow antlers, a characteristic unique among deer. They have small ears to regulate heat loss, fur-covered noses and wide, splayed hooves to enable them to walk across hard snow in the winter and slushy snow and spongy tundra in spring and summer.

"Their hooves act like snow shoes," he said.

Reindeer are little more than 3 feet tall at the shoulders and live about seven or eight years in the wild, up to 13 years in captivity. Tobias compares the Sami and their connection to reindeer to Native Americans and their reliance on the buffalo.

"The similarities are striking," he said. "Just as the Native Americans of the Plains were known to use every part of the buffalo they hunted for something, the same can be said of the Sami people and reindeer. They even made teepees from reindeer hide."

The animal's link to Santa Claus — at least the modern American version of the gift-giving symbol of the Christmas season — likely dates back to the early 19th century.

According to the "Santa Map: A Cultural Geography of the World's Most Beloved Man," published by

Hedberg Maps Inc. of Minneapolis in 1809, "writing under the pseudonym Diedrich Knickerbocker, Washington Irving described St. Nicholas in his book 'A History of New York.' An 1812 revision took note of the saint's mode of travel: a flying wagon."

In "1821, Publisher William Gilley printed a poem in 'The Children's Friend' about 'Santeclaus,' who was dressed in fur and drove a sleigh drawn by a single reindeer," according to "The Santa Map."

Then, the following year, "Clement C. Moore wrote 'A Visit from St. Nicholas,' using his German handyman as a model. Published anonymously in the Troy, N.Y., Sentinel the next year, the poem described St. Nick delivering gifts on Christmas. It became one of the most cherished Christmas classics of all time."

In the poem, Moore writes about the sleigh being pulled by eight tiny reindeer. He even named them:

"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen! On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Donder and Blitzen! To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall! Now dash away! dash away! dash away all," Moore wrote.

The image stuck and now reindeer are a traditional part of the holiday.

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