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MAGAZINE  
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## THEN AND NOW **ROBOTICS** A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE



Aibo



Hero Robot



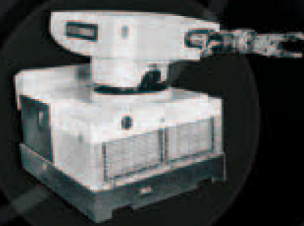
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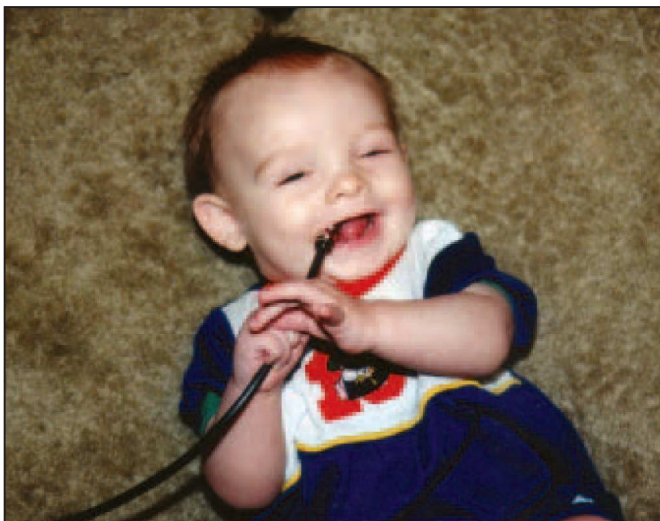
## ***Dusting Robots One Woman's View of Life With an Electronics Hobbyist***

by Kym Graner

*When you were five, 10, or even 15 years old, what did you want to be when you grew up? I'm betting those career aspirations changed with your interests until you eventually became whatever you are today. Maybe you wanted to be a fireman-superhero-doctor, or maybe a veterinarian-cheerleader-cop. I wanted to be a mom. From the time I was about 12, I knew that was the job for me. Nothing showy, nothing extremely technical or requiring decades of schooling. I just loved kids, cooking, crafts, and the outdoors. I couldn't think of anything better than being a stay-at-home mom.*

**B**y the time I graduated high school, I had already met the love of my life, Vern, and was well on my way to my career goal. We got married in our early 20s and, although I had a "day job," I embraced my home life in my free time. Fast-forward 10 years and enter our first child, Nic. Finally! The time to stay home and hone my mothering skills

**Nic as a baby (left). Nic now (right).**



had arrived. I had picked up some techie skills through my job, but didn't really anticipate ever needing them again, except for working on our home network or fixing my sister's computer. Then came reality.

A mere two months after our son was born, Vern and I decided to open a small ISP and network services company. My marginal techie skills took a quick ramp up to being a full-

fledged Novell CNA with a strong A+ skill set. My husband was (and is) an excellent network engineer. As he designed and installed networks, I would assist and then go on to administer, repair, and upgrade as needed. Our son became accustomed to a wide range of environments as he traveled with me to customer sites and enchanted everyone there. After the business settled into more ISP and less network services, child number two was on her way and I once again attempted the stay-at-home thing. But my quiet Suzy Homemaker world was not going to stay that way for long. By then, my husband's electronics interests had branched out to include the Halloween world.

Let me explain: My husband is a prolific designer of devices. He has developed the Robo Spin-Art machine, the Ponginator, Therepings, Ping Pong Printer, Sonar Station, a talking skull in a coffin, a 20-foot wide "venomous" spider, and so much more. The ideas he has still on the drawing board have the same potential for eye-catching



**Sami as a baby (left). Sami now (right).**

fun that the ones already living in the outside world possess. He's always been like this — inventing things since he was in grade school. He really can't help it.

Many of these creations came together in 2005 to make an awesome Halloween Haunt that the neighborhood still talks about. Unfortunately, it was made at the expense of my one beautifully decorated room — the dining room. My vintage cherry Queen Anne dining set, hutch, and my grandmother's antique desk had to take shelter in my bedroom. The stained glass chandelier was removed, black plastic sheeting was stapled onto my gorgeous crimson walls, and voilà! One scary spider's lair was created. Like I said, it was fab — award-winning, even! But just last weekend, I found another staple in the ceiling, holding just a scrap of spider webbing.

The accoutrement that currently grace my dining room include two human-sized robots/sculptures, the coffin guy, Bob — who, at roughly six feet in height — is also human-sized, a Stargate Defender machine, a trashcan zombie, and an evil spider-controlled robot. My living room set includes a former motorized wheelchair base, turned mobile platform for an in-process "boogie bot," one of the Robo Spin-Art machines, and a supply of ping pong balls for the Ping Pong Printer. Rather than reflecting my daydreaming interest in a *Better Homes & Gardens* living space, our house now sports a look that was once described by a friend as looking like Godzilla swallowed a RadioShack and then threw up. There's a part of me that wishes my home could revert to the "normal" decorator dream it started to become. But then I look at all the fun we've had making and showing off these things, teaching our children to design and build, and getting to meet like-minded people, and it makes the "clutter" worth the sacrifice. **SV**



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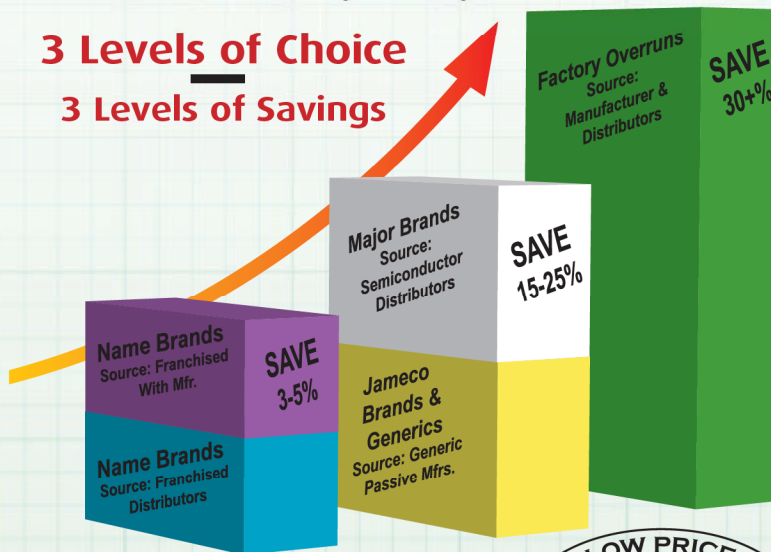
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