Today Bruce Guernsey of Bethel recalls the phone he once bought for his aging mother, whose experience with it, he writes, was for him both comic and “immensely poignant.”

The Present
by Bruce Guernsey

For her birthday that year
I bought my mother
one of those portable phones,
a new kind you could carry
all over the house
so she wouldn’t be alone
anywhere anymore,

except she couldn’t remember
where she’s left it
most of the time those days
and hurried in her slippers
from one room to the next
only to hear it ringing
somewhere down the hall

and opens the front door
to no one there
or still on the phone
when she finally found it
where she never put it,
the house getting bigger
as she gets smaller

but no less busy
than she was before
with us six kids
and my father at work, or war—
this new phone like having us
still around, calling from somewhere,
upstairs or down.