

Governor needs to prove qualities

It wasn't a bright day to start off a governorship — it rained and rained and rained.

Rookie Gov. Mark White gave the usual "we shall overcome" inaugural address and the usual crowd showed up to wish him well.

But after the inauguration ceremony, White initiated a touch of the bizarre.

Editorial

Wielding a pair of bolt cutters, he cut the lock off the gate to the governor's mansion, symbolizing his desire to open Texas government to the public.

The display of populism fit the festive mood of the day. But now it's time for White to leave such trite displays to campaigning and get on with the real issues.

White has a big challenge ahead. Texas, traditionally a bastion of oil-based prosperity, faces high unemployment and a shaky economy. In addition, the state highway system is decaying, many state universities are in need of repair and utility costs are soaring.

In his inaugural speech, White pledged to try to remedy those problems and more. His intentions are noble, but he has outlined few specific plans.

White now is at the helm of the nation's third largest state. He knows what the problems are; he has four years in which to solve them.

Campaign rhetoric won't cut it — neither will bolt cutters. The tools White now needs are persistence, integrity and ingenuity.

Texas voters felt he had those qualities; now it's up to him to prove it.

Goodbye Ma Bell; Hello local company

by Art Buchwald

One of the saddest things Americans will have to face in 1983 is the demise of "Ma" Bell, who, at the urging of the Justice Department, is going out of the telephone business and into "computers" and esoteric communications. From now on, each one of us will be at the mercy of his or her local telephone company.

I've always been very sentimentally attached to the old gal so I went over last week to say goodbye.

"We're going to miss you, 'Ma,'" I told her as she was packing some cable and silicon chips in her suitcase.

"I'm going to miss every last one of you," she said. "You were all my children and we shared many good times and bad times together."

"It doesn't seem right to break you up," I said bitterly. "You were the best telephone system in the whole world. I never told anyone this before, but you were the only monopoly I ever loved."

"I did the best I could," she said, wiping away a tear. "Some people did call me a monopoly, but I was a benevolent one. I had to make a profit for the widows and orphans who owned my stock. But I also made it possible for almost everyone in this country to own a telephone. I soaked the rich on long-distance calls, so I could subsidize the poor who wanted to make local ones."

"You were the last American monopoly who had a heart."

"My only desire in life," she said, "was to reach out and touch someone."

I handed her a Kleenex.

"When something went wrong with your phone," she sobbed, "I sent one of my people out there right away to fix it and I never charged you."

"And when we got lucky you always let us keep the change we found in the coin box at a pay phone."

"The girls I trained to be operators were the friendliest women America. And I respected people's privacy. If you didn't want to be in the phone book I always found you an unlisted number."

"You let our fingers do the walking in the Yellow Pages."

"I tried to make life a little easier for everybody."

"Tell me, 'Ma,' of all the innovations you thought up during the years, which one were you the proudest of?"

"The collect telephone call. I made it possible for generations of children to keep in touch with their parents. I doubt without the collect call if parents would have ever heard from their kids again."

"Only a mother would have thought of the collect telephone call," I said.

She put a Princess phone and a Touch-Tone dialer in her suitcase.

"The Justice Department never did like me. They've been out to get me for years. Well, at least I wired up the country before they won their case."

"If it hadn't been for you there wouldn't be telephone poles strung across this nation from sea to shining sea."

"Could you use an old switchboard?" she asked me.

"I'd like that. It would remind me of the wonderful times we had together."

"Well, I guess I'm all packed," she said. "It was nice of you to stop in and say goodbye. Most people forget."

"I'll never forget you. Every time the phone rings I'll say to myself, 'Ask not for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for 'Ma.'"

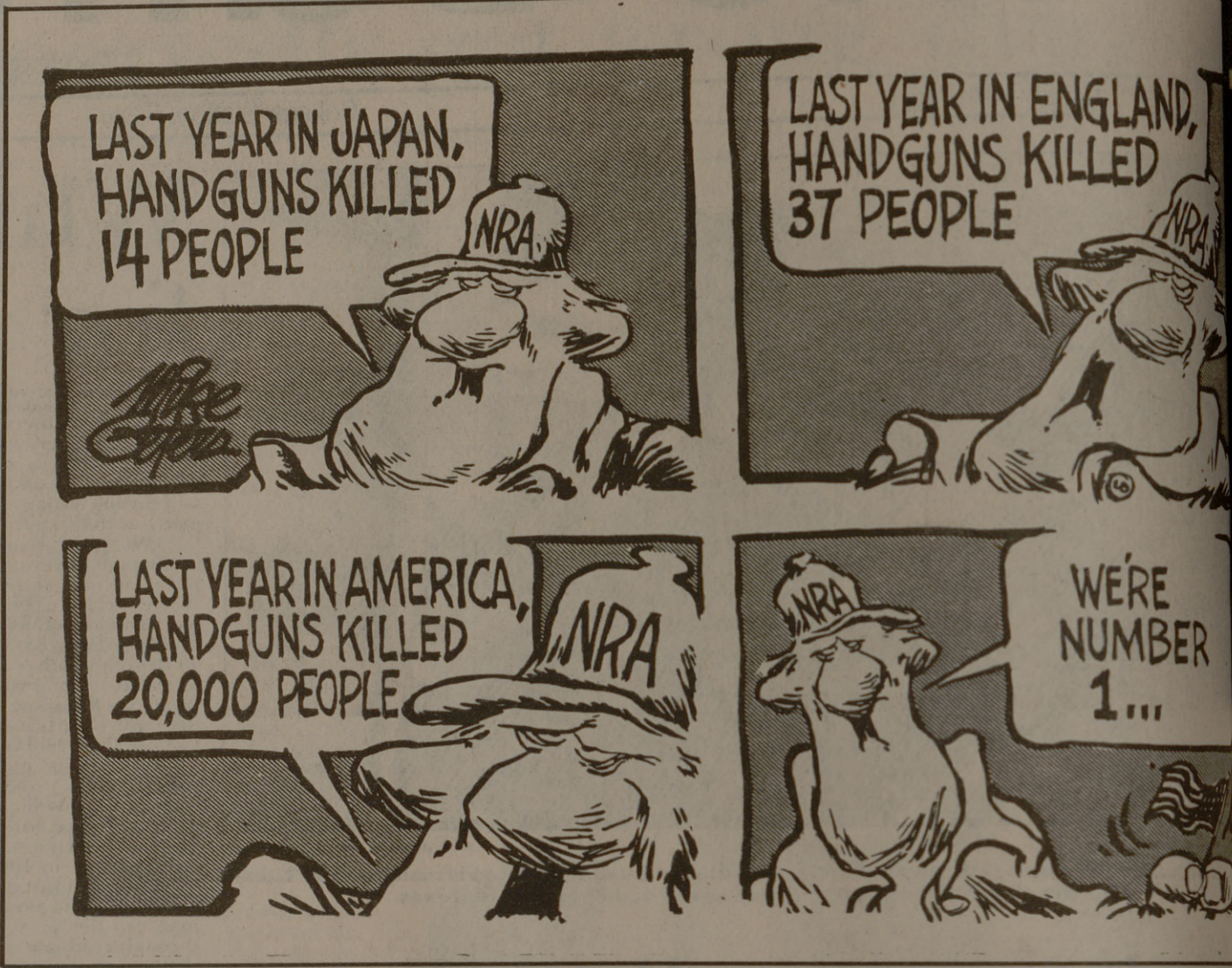
Tears started to well up in her eyes. "I suppose now that I've been broken up you'll never call me any more."

"Of course I'll call you, 'Ma.'"

"When?"

"Friday."

"Mrs. Estrin's son Melvyn calls her every day."



Finding friends — bit by byte

by Maxwell Glen and Cody Shearer

We were marveling at our home computer terminal one day last week when the green screen blinked "Chat from TCS221." Someone, somewhere, wanted to talk.

We'd heard a lot about such people since installing the machine last week. And we were wary. To our minds, the much-touted computer revolution wasn't worth pursuing if it meant that Americans would communicate only through their modems.

Moreover, neither of us knew how to "chat," a common nickname for instantaneous, on-line, two-way communication. We didn't know what topics were considered chatworthy, much less what functions were needed to begin our first electronic relationship.

With some prompting from the screen, we found TCS221 to be Andrew Schlein, a Manhattan pharmaceutical analyst who is somewhat of a spokesman for chatniks. Schlein has been chatting with hundreds of computer buffs for more than a year. Last month he threw a Christmas party for several dozen, some of whom he'd known only over the wires. He gave us a taste of computer-aided communication while filling us in about his favorite hobby.

According to Schlein, his party was only one of many such gatherings of chatterers who subscribe either to the Reader's Digest Source or the Ohio-based CompuServe computer network. It's natural, he said, for people who meet via either network to get together eventually.

Like us, most Americans probably

don't fully comprehend the "personal" side of the personal computer. Manuals and promotional literature certainly give little hint. The advantages center more on storage, programming and the considerable educational functions of the

... the green screen blinked "Chat from TCS221." Someone, somewhere, wanted to talk.

machine. Yet, despite all one hears about Americans' insatiable interest in the technology of tomorrow, personal-computer owners who hook up with user networks spend a majority of their on-line time in age-old pastimes: meeting strangers, exchanging interests and ideas, flirting and — just imagine it — falling in love.

Relationships born from the computer, however, are apparently unlike those that users have had in the past. Freed from the often-imposing prejudices we assign to looks and mannerisms, chatterers open up rapidly to partners. Blessed with anonymity, individuals are more confident about their thought. Charges for on-line time make users more spontaneous; friendships blossom at accelerated rates.

Could TCS221 compare chatting with other types of human exchange?

"You open up the way you do with someone you meet on an airplane," Schlein reported in response. "You say more than normal to someone you may never see."

For many, the effect is liberating. Interactive television rejuvenated the lives of senior citizens in Reading, Pa., recently, allowing many house-bound residents to revive old friendships, discuss local politics and meet new friends. Elsewhere

across the country, computer

has led married couples to talk with adolescent wish kids who mothers befriend bachelors.

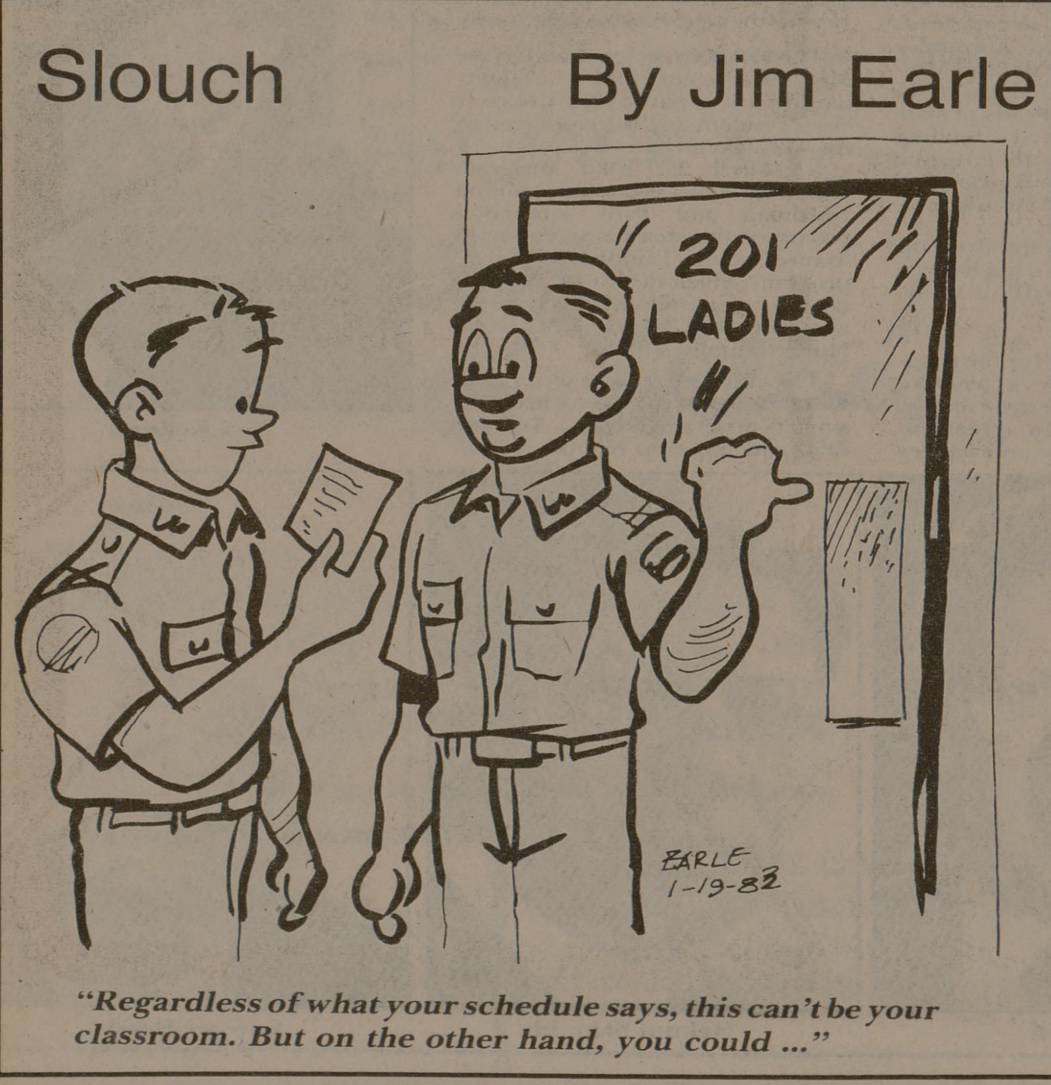
Most users, particularly those in big cities, go one step further together. Reports of special meetings by users who live hundreds of miles apart are increasing. Meeting for a dinner was only the first step. Dozen or so couples whom the and CompuServe say have met

computer and eventually been married. TCS221 admitted that some at the prospect of personal computer he worry that the new technology in time, lead some users to find people for computer blips and from society?

"It's simply not true," he first cold, green type. "In fact, I'm with a much larger group than one would meet in daily life. Machine encourages, rather than discourages, interaction."

Indeed, the "dehumanizing" computerization may be overdone. The personal computer, at least seem to have a greater potential opposite effect. As John Fickler, vice director of news and public relations for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting pointed out in his recent book on communications, "Electronic 'mare,' two-way action is a far cry from the one-way channels of television.

For now, the advent of the computer means more than a way to mize our business opportunities only going to change the way we communicate, but could make better municators of us all.



"Regardless of what your schedule says, this can't be your classroom. But on the other hand, you could ..."

Letter: incentives in education

Editor: I direct this to Mr. Biju Matthew and his recent article of January 17. Mr. Matthew, a college degree certifies a certain level of proficiency in a field of study, not a level of proficiency in market analysis (although that happens to be included in some business applications).

If you really want to begin to solve the problem of incentive in education, I suggest that you examine the premise widely accepted in today's society that educational institutions should be public and tax-supported.

The spirit of your suggestions is well taken, but go to the root of the problem instead of providing statistics with cannon fodder.

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