

staff photo by Brenda Davidson

Gone fishing

Gene Beyer, a junior wildlife and fisheries engineering major from San Antonio. Since he wasn't a fish, Beyer decided to throw him back.

'Computer widow' tells of unusual problems

PHOENIX — It used to be divorced women were called grass widows. Football widows now mourn all year instead of just the fall.

I'm coining a new phrase — computer widow.

Ever since Bob toted a baby computer home, it's been byebye Pat.

Oh, I know all the answers. Develop my own interests, find somebody else who plays racquetball and hits the ball easy for me, read articles about the growing phenomenon of computer neglect. Right up to, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em."

Nothing helps. When he sits down in front of that blinking blue eye and seductive keyboard, he might as well be in Australia and I'm in the cold.

Inevitably I remember something to ask him after he enters computerland, but the response is silence or snarls of frustration.

Now my key phrase is, "Let me know when you reach a breaking point."

Thus he knows I have something on my mind and usually his curiosity wins out.

Now HIS key phrase is, "Why didn't you think of that before I got started?"

We have nightly discussions about my feelings of neglect. He points out I used to complain he watched too much television. Out of the boob tube and into byte fright.

Now he watches television an hour a night — and that after I pressured him into an agreement to spend time with me.

He is learning the meaning of time. Once a carefree soul who ignored clocks as much as possible, he has learned to check the hour before he shuts down for

the night. He knows I'll ask in the morning.

He hasn't yet agreed with me that since he spends at least 40 hours a week on the computer, he ought to find a job with one and get paid for it. He knows my objective is to get his baby off my turf.

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In the beginning we played together. We started on an adventure game in which the object is to find treasures like jeweled eggs and crystal scepters. I was pretty good at that. I was the one who figured out how to go up the chimney to get

back to the starting point. Heck, I was the one who woke up in the middle of the night with the solution for opening the floodgates of the dam.

Then, the adventure got old, and Bob got more interested in programming a game and getting it to work right than actually playing it. His warehouse of perfectly programmed, unplayed games is growing rapidly.

He squints at pages of microscopic lettering, pecking away with two fingers for hours, cursing when something doesn't work right.

I helped with programming for awhile, reading aloud things like "ifa-0\$b-0\$then(2c-3c)(13)am\$1023going(z-x)crazy."

While Bob continues his computer affair, I keep seeking a solution to feeling like the old shoe. Meanwhile, I have made a vow to take advantage of his obsession and learn about computers, wave of the future and all that.

I am going to learn. I am. Just as soon as I finish my letter to Dear Abby.

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"Quality First"

More senior citizens becoming alcoholics

WASHINGTON — It has been estimated that 3 million American men and women over the age of 60 are alcoholics, but a Texas researcher says the figure may be far too low.

Dr. Patricia J. Bloom, assistant professor of family medicine at Texas Tech University Health Science Center at Amarillo, said drinking problems among some older people may go undetected because they are retired, live alone and seldom leave their homes.

In addition, Dr. Bloom said the person or his family may conceal the alcoholism because of embarrassment.

"When the elderly people in this country were growing up, the stigma surrounding alcoholism was much greater than it is now," she said. "Thus, many of

them have been conditioned to feel intense guilt and shame about their alcoholism."

Dr. Bloom said alcoholism in people over 60 also may be masked by standards used to determine how much alcohol a person can tolerate. She said they are geared toward younger people and do not take into consideration the reduced amount of water in older people's bodies and their decreased body size.

"What would be considered mild to moderate alcohol consumption in a young person may constitute problem drinking in an elderly person," Dr. Bloom wrote in American Family Physician, a publication of the American Academy of Family Physicians.

Detecting excessive drinking in elderly people is particularly important, she said, because the

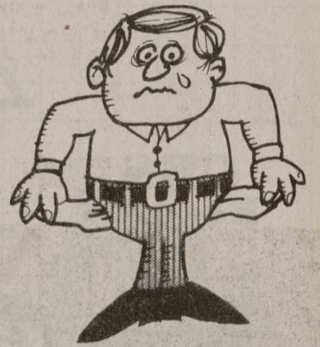
medical problems common among older people may be worsened by even minimal alcohol consumption.

In addition, she said alcohol provides "empty" calories and "may decrease appetite in a member of an age group that, in general, is poorly nourished." And she said alcohol may alter the effects of medicines taken by an elderly person.

Dr. Bloom said many people begin drinking late in life in response to stress associated with aging. For example, an elderly person who lost a spouse may drink to cope with loneliness.

"Earlier in life, they may have dealt with stress more constructively, but because of the debilitating effects of aging, they are no longer able to handle the stress and thus begin to drink for relief," she said.

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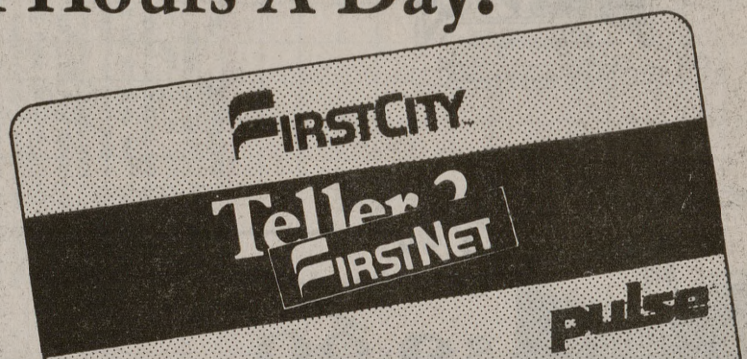
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