



# Ms. Butterfingers faces phone registration

Story by Nancy Neukirchner

It's the first day of classes, Spring 1987. I am happy and refreshed from my month-long vacation and ready for anything this school can throw my way. Well, almost.

I go to my first class — supposedly English 325, creative writing. At first it seems odd that the class meets in the old Chemistry building, but then I remember the semester I had statistics in the Animal Industries building and chalk another one up to university classroom logistics.

As I side-step my way through a row of seats, carefully avoiding sensible shoes and briefcases, I nervously notice quite a few calculators and mechanical pencils neatly arranged on top of graph paper.

Being a liberal arts major, I am rarely required to carry these items and I begin to wonder why we would need these things to write creatively. Maybe the class is a requirement for engineering majors.

I find a seat next to a girl who has six perfectly sharpened pencils lined up across her desk, easily accessible if she breaks the point on the one in her poised hand. As the teacher enters the room, the girl furiously begins taking notes.

Without saying a word, the professor sets down his briefcase, walks over to the black-

board and writes the name of the class on the black slate.

The words SEMINAR IN QUANTUM MECHANICAL ASTROPHYSICS AND ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELD THEORY jump out at me, startling my body into near shock. As my potential energy is converted into kinetic energy, I grab my backpack and flee from the room, barely escaping a semester of nuclear fallout.

After my heart rate returns to normal, I wonder how an error of this immensity could have occurred.

All of a sudden, it hits me. Phone registration! I must have dialed a wrong digit.

I vividly recall that day in November when I registered for my spring classes right from my dorm room. I thought it was a great idea at the time. No more lines to see busy advisors and no more registration lines. The only thing I had to worry about was crowded phone lines.

My roommate and I were astounded. You could Dial-A-Joke, Dial-A-Prayer and now you, yes you, could Dial-A-Class.

Well, perhaps dial is the wrong word. Now you could Touch-Tone-A-Class.

I began to follow the step-by-step instructions provided in my class schedule book. I thought I was doing fine, but about the

time I was registering for my third class, someone answered the phone.

"Hello."

"What do you mean, hello? I'm not done."

"You're not done what?"

"Registering for 627-310-500."

"What are you talking about?"

"What's the number I dial to terminate a request?"

"Who is this?"

"This is personal identification number 06-17-65. Who is this?"

"This is Marge in Juneau."

"Is Juneau in Texas?"

"No, Juneau is in Alaska."

Click.

A little shaken after nearly dialing my bank account away, I tried again. This time class registration was successful. But I wondered when the person with a Social Security number one digit away from mine would find out that he was registered for journalism curricula.

The third time, I correctly registered for my classes, but I had some problems with the fee options. I accidentally signed up for three meals, two dorm rooms and a shuttle bus pass. While attempting to drop my extra options, I dropped two classes and by the time I re-registered for *those* classes they were full. Just my luck.

At this point, I decided that dropping out of school would be my best option, until I learned that I had to call back and dial a number with 67 digits to do it.

Modern technology is astounding.

What's next? Maybe Dial-A-Lecture. Why bother getting up and going to class? Just dial the subject number, course number and section number of your classes and listen to the lecture over the phone.

If the professor insists on taking role, students just dial their Social Security numbers and personal identification numbers. An advanced voice-check system will identify the students in case they try to get their roommates to call. And if they hang up the phone mid-lecture, a beep will sound alerting the professor. Then the whole class will wait while he re-engages the rude student with the help of a tracing system.

Or maybe Dial-A-Football Game. Instead of enduring the trek to third deck and the hot sun of the earlier games, students could call a number to listen to a game. 845-KYLE perhaps.

But here's what I *really* want to know: if we register like this again in the fall, will they figure out a way to take ID pictures over the phone?