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Our client, Patricia Roy, lost 86 lbs.

Hi-tech brings new side effects

Some people embrace new technology with infuriating ease, but the rest of us have to be dragged kicking and screaming into the late 20th century.

I was still living happily in the stone age when my husband bought me an answering machine. I stuck it beside the phone where, it crouched, impatiently for several weeks, until I reluctantly plugged it in.

It took me hours to record a breathtakingly unoriginal message that said "I was busy right now, but if you would please leave your name and number after the tone, I'd get back to you as soon as possible."

Soon, I had to admit (but not to my husband) that it was quite a useful device. Not long afterwards, I was even leaving coherent messages on other people's machines instead of handing up in tongue-tied confusion. Things were going well. I loved my husband, my children and the cat; I could even tolerate my answering machine.

I should have known that wouldn't be the end.

"I've heard about a place that sells Apples for a song," he said, fresh from a day of accessing files and initializing disks. I told him I thought 69¢ a lb. locally was hard to beat. One big



KATE'S CORNER
Kate Gilderdale

misunderstanding and more than a few dollars later, I was the reluctant owner of a 512K, two disk drives and a high resolution screen.

It glowered at me from my desk while I carried on bashing out letters to Mum on my perfectly serviceable typewriter. "How's the computer?" my husband would enquire from the office. "Fine," I would reply airily, blowing on the liquid paper to hasten the drying process.

Once or twice I half-heartedly picked up one of the instruction manuals which came with my new toy. With this machine, it said, I was in charge. It doesn't know me, I thought grimly.

On the next page, I discovered it was more of a soul mate than I had anticipated. I began to feel a warm flow of empathy as I read "switch the machine on if it's not already on."

When it told me to "insert the disk into the disk drive, metal end first, label side up," I was hooked. Not only did it speak English, it addressed without condescension the total technological incompetence I had hitherto imagined was mine alone.

By the time the old man got around to sitting down in front of it, I found I could actually teach him how it worked.

Now my machine and I are inseparable and I just can't understand people who won't try computers. I'm still holding out against car telephones though.

At one point in my checkered career, I sold advertising. The only place on earth where I could escape from clients whose ads had appeared on the wrong day, or with the wrong phone number, was my car.

Driving aimlessly around Markham, dropping into the mall for a coffee, I could avoid all contact with the world and put off the dreaded moment of confrontation.

Now they're even trying to eliminate that haven and all you have left is the excuse that you misunderstood someone because of static. No doubt some high-tech genius will soon find a cure for that.

In fact, technology has a lot for which to answer. Procrastinators everywhere are a doomed species. With Fax machines popping up relentlessly across the nation, we can't even blame Canada Post for losing things in the mail.

It's really going to sort out the sheep from the goats and a lot of us are going to be unmasked.

Meanwhile, I refuse to obtain a car phone. But if I do, I'll want an answering machine attachment, call screening and promise to "get back to you as soon as possible," if it's someone threatening.

You never know, they might even believe me when I say the tape ran out and I didn't get the message.

Student trade fair a success

By BRUCE STAPLEY

Students at Stouffville District Secondary School had an opportunity to see what makes the Tech Department tick Feb. 2.

The gymnasium was transformed into a demonstration area for the machinery used by the SDSS technical classes. The event is known as Trade Fair.

"It was a hands-on affair with students actually getting a chance to use the machines," said Wally Currie, the school's woodworking specialist. "They were able to make small things, and see displays of what's been made this year and in the past by the various students."

Displays included projects related to woodworking, electrical, auto shop, machine shop and drafting. Teachers were on hand to assist students in demonstrations.

Grade 9 to 11 students arrived at the gym in groups of 35 from 1-3 p.m. to view and participate. Draws for pizza added an additional personal touch.

"We're not just trying to encourage students to take up these interests for future careers," said Mr. Currie. "It's good to know something about these trades as a hobby. A boy or girl can save a lot of money if he or she can fix his or her own car, do electrical work or build furniture."

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