

## Telephone talkers prefer to remain invisible

By PAT CAHILL

Speaking to a disembodied voice that comes out of a piece of plastic is second nature to all of us. We've been talking on the telephone since we were children.

But some people foresee a day when picture-telephones will make today's push-button miracles seem as quaint as the "horn" of 1930's movies.

AT&T introduced a picturephone 22 years ago. PicTel Corporation of Peabody recently came up with a version they say is better.

Isn't progress wonderful? Well, sort of. We asked some people who use the phone a lot what they think of picture-telephones. And it seems a lot of us prefer to remain invisible when talking on the phone.

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"I have a feeling people wouldn't answer the phone if they looked like a wreck," says Professor Joan DiGiovanni, who teaches psychology at Western New England College. "Probably more so with adolescents, since they are so concerned about marketing themselves."

People would give up doing things like cutting out coupons while talking on the phone, says DiGiovanni, since they would feel compelled "to give all their attention to the video display."

DiGiovanni says she would like a picture-telephone herself, mainly for the pleasure of seeing her daughters in California and Maryland.

However, she says that being invisible makes some tasks easier. "You'd be more apt to fire someone over the phone. And it's easier to say

'I'm not interested' in answer to requests.

"There's more of a sense of obligation with eye contact. You'd feel more reluctant to say no."

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That's exactly why Carl Zachar thinks the picture-telephone is a great idea. Zachar is director of alumni giving at Springfield College, and he says the best way to raise money is face-to-face.

"If you don't see a person," he says, "it's very easy to say thank you, goodbye, and hang up."

A contribution would be more likely, says Zachar, if the person who picked up the phone had the pleasure of seeing as well as hearing an old classmate at the other end of the line. "The kids could gather around the telephone, the husband or wife could come up and say hello."

Zachar would make it a point to get a donation from his old roommate in Arizona. "I could really put the arm on him if I got him eyeball-to-eyeball."

But if Zachar were on the receiving end of a call, he wouldn't be so eager. "I might have just come out of the shower or gone to bed early. I guess when the phone rang I would have to be prepared."

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Janet Teng of Amherst once had a job doing a telephone survey on health costs. She says a picture-telephone would have been a "terrible" handicap.

"Sometimes you have to ask private questions about income," she says, "and the person you are interviewing is unwilling as it is."

"If you are only a voice, then

there is some semblance of privacy. But if you see each other completely, that's gone."

Interviewers were expected to work from their own homes, and Teng feels that her kitchen might not have looked very professional to the people she interviewed.

She wouldn't want a picture-telephone for personal use, either. "I like to talk to people face-to-face, I like to write letters, and I like to talk on the telephone," she says. "They are three different things, and they're all important. If I had a picture-telephone, I would turn it off."

Like many, she conjures up the image of having to "rush out of the shower and put a towel around yourself to answer the phone. You don't know who is calling. It could be a friend — or a commercial salesman with a pitch."

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Margaret McClamroch of Hadley has interviewed about 60 people for a book she is writing on identical twins. When they live far away — for example, California and Texas — she has relied on long-distance phone calls.

She says that a video image, "no matter how imperfect," would enhance the phone interviews, but "I don't think not having it is a great loss."

She feels that a picture-telephone might disrupt the mood that she tries to achieve in her interviews. "I try to be as relaxed and comfortable as possible," says McClamroch, who works from her home.

Having to "straighten a corner of the house" and attend to personal appearance might cause both speak-



ers to feel more formal.

McClamroch adds that the usefulness of a visual image might also depend on how experienced the speaker was in using the device.

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Larry Carringer, who hosts a music show mornings on WHFM (93-FM) radio, says he would not get as many on-the-air calls from listeners if they were visible. "Most people wouldn't call," he says. "Or they might put bags over their heads, or look the other way."

"The people who call in are playing along with a gag, playing a character. If they had to appear on a screen, they might decide they couldn't make the call until they'd had a shower."

"Half the fun of radio is using your imagination," Carringer said on the phone. "I believe you see pictures when you hear music or a per-

son talking. You get a visual image now, while I'm talking to you."

Carringer believes that "telephone speaking" is different from the speech we normally use. He likes the idea that the telephone forces us to rely entirely on the English language, without the help of gestures or facial expressions.

The picture-telephone, says Carringer, "is one of the last things we need to have invented."

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Kate LaMay of Northampton used to host radio call-in shows on WMUA and WHMP that covered subjects from birth control to nuclear disarmament. A picture-telephone, she says, "would definitely have cut down on the number of calls. People wouldn't have felt as free to express their opinions."

"Anonymity," says LaMay, "usually lends itself to truth."

She says that if she were conducting a show on dieting, for example, a person who was 60 pounds overweight might be reluctant to call.

On the other hand, she says that "it's nice to be able to use yourself visually if you're the host or hostess." She says shows like Phil Donahue's, where the caller is invisible but the host is seen, are very effective.

LaMay has mixed feelings about a picture-telephone in her home. "It stirs up a 'Big Brother is Watching You' feeling," she says, referring to the lack of privacy in George Orwell's novel "1984."

"You couldn't discuss things over the phone while you were taking a bubble bath. But if you were in the kitchen sharing a recipe, that might be fun."

"Unless," she adds, "you had smoke coming from the bottom of the pan."

## Sports memorabilia will be highlight of school auction

An exciting auction sponsored by The Grammar School at Stony Hill in Wilbraham should appeal to sports fans as well as those who cherish unique experiences. The event, which will feature both priceless and practical items, will be held on Sunday, June 1 at 2:00 p.m. in the Mahogany Room at Symphony Hall in Springfield.

Sports fans will not want to miss the opportunity to bid on a football personally autographed by the New England Patriots, or a basketball autographed by all team members of this year's Boston Celtics team.

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Baseball fans might covet a Jim Rice model baseball bat, autographed by Rice, Carl Yaz-stremski, Ted Williams, Rich Gedman and Wade Boggs, or a Rich Gedman model baseball bat, autographed by Gedman, Wade Boggs, Jim Rice and Ted Williams.

Those who would prefer an autographed baseball can choose from a baseball autographed by Ted Williams and surviving members of the 1946 Boston Red Sox Team or one autographed by the

three DiMaggio brothers and other baseball greats.

If sporting action is more your style, you might bid on two sky box tickets to a Boston Red Sox game in Sept., with limousine service to and from your home to Fenway Park, or two fall tickets to the New England Patriots-Miami Dolphins football game.

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If politics appeal to you, you might cherish a congressional gavel, autographed by Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill or if meeting Mayor Neal in person is your dream, this is your chance. One of the items up for auction is lunch with the Mayor and a tour of Springfield City Hall. A hot-air balloon ride for two is another experience the audience will bid on, along with a gourmet dinner for four people, to be prepared and served in your own home.

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Doll lovers will not want to miss the opportunity to buy an original pre-Coleco Cabbage Patch Doll, autographed by creator Xavier Roberts.

And for kids, how about two

weeks at Stony Brooks Acres Camo in Wilbraham or a Sony Walkman? Adults or children who like to play might be lucky with their bids on professional swimming, gymnastic, tennis, soccer and horseback riding lessons.

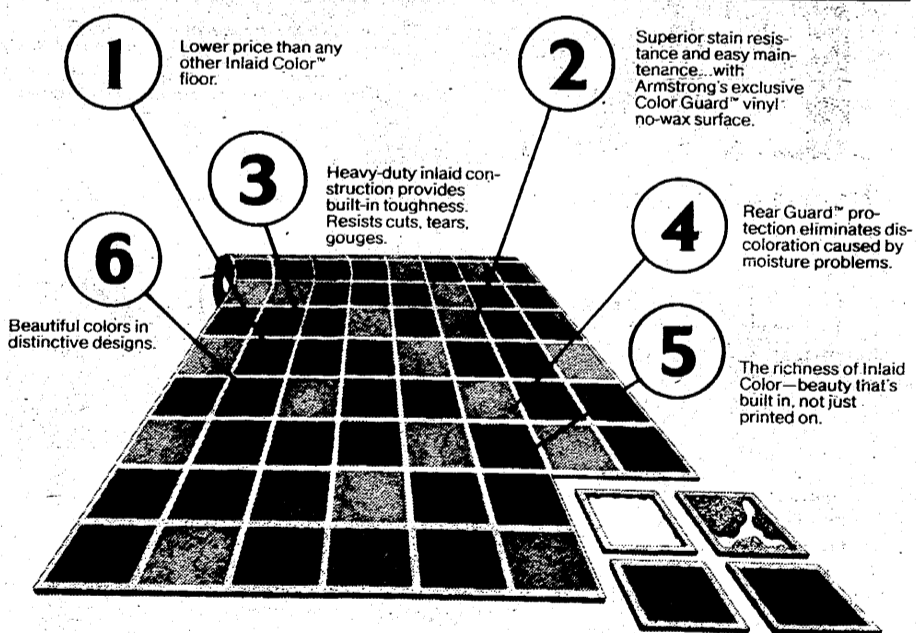
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Other items to be offered at the auction include a Spaulding golf bag, a television set, vintage wines, including a 1978 Don Perignon champagne, and luxury luggage. Many items are still coming in, and the auction is sure to have something that will appeal to every member of the family.

Admission to the auction is \$5 per person, and will include many door prizes. Items will be auctioned by professional auctioneer Kevin Gouvin, and MasterCard and Visa will be accepted.

Pre-bids accompanied by cash or personal check will be accepted at the school in Headmaster Richard Denniston's office through Friday May 29. Mrs. Barry Gottehrer of Wilbraham is chairperson for the event.

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