

PEOPLE



Mike Cook talks on the computer at the Brain Wash coffeeshouse. "I'm not really into computers," he says, "but this is really interesting."

The Computerized Kaffeeklatsch

Cafes' electronic bulletin boards offer cybersex with your latte

BY SHANNAN KIRK
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

In the Brain Wash cafe on Potrero, Mike Cook ignores the concrete floors, the industrial lighting and flashing lights in the background, the hum of a typewriter and the sound of a jukebox. He is plugged up their latest, slouchy or deconstructed socks and debating the relative merits of the universe at large.

Mike Cook is busy doing some serious one-lingered typing on a computer console. He may look as if he's not, but he is. He's on the Net.

To call SF Net a computer system linking a number of Bay Area coffeeshouses is to oversimplify. The Net is an ethic, an aesthetic, a social system, a place to hang, a way of life. Users are called Net-heads, or Net-heads. For the intertext and the fascinated, the Net provides new things, new friends, new places to party and the thrill of safe dating — cyber style.

Here's how it works. Say you have some time on your hands. You cruise into one of the coffeeshouses that's logged on to the Net — the Jumpin' Java on Cole, or the Horseshoe on Haight. You wait until the table's free. (It might take hours.) You slide into the seat and stare down at the monitor.

It's set flush into a table and covered with plastic to protect against the inevitable espresso spill. The screen cordially invites you to insert your two minutes, one-half time, and it introduces itself as "the first true public message forum."

Once you're connected, you have to start making a series of rapid choices. Do you want the chat? Rober chat? FidoNet? Do you want to talk about events, politics, graffiti, art, outbursts, books and poetry, movies, computers, sports, great cities, buy/trade, environment, science/tech, title, women's or men's issues?

You settle on the chat and log on. A tip for the uninitiated — it's cooler and safer, to choose a handle. When the computer asks for your name, tell it something bizarre. The more outrageous the better. Examples of existing handles include: Treasurer (Troll, Old Man, Love Bomber, Venus Anderson, Alice Avoni, Mr. Wonderful, Three Amateurs) — you get the picture.

You'll generally be greeted warmly by the other participants in your "conference table," and the conversation will start to scroll rapidly past your eyes. Jump right in — remember, your clock is ticking. These conversations aren't always deep and profound; one-revoked conversation went like this:

(L: treasure troll) leaving.
(R: old mole) eek

BY THE CHRONICLE

(R: sleazy) grotchgrotch you trollie
(L: sleazy) In my bippiee tm new thought id
introduce myself.
(R: old mole) you he said hi first to me
(R: see monkey) It's not a good sign when the bed
creaks and you sleep on a futon.
And so on... Love chats are generally pretty light-weight, self-described as "bitch and banal," with humor and some emotional discussions mixed in.
For deeper conversation, you'd have to dip into the philosophy basket, where you might find messages like this one:
"I keep calling SF (Net) for some reason, looking for the answers. Unfortunately, I'm not finding them. I guess I'm growing up even though I'm against it and want to place my life in reverse."
Or this: "Is truth our guide or the opinion that may lock us up? I wonder what Luther, Galileo, Pascal, Thoreau, Garrison or Gandhi would say to that?"
What keeps Netters coming back to pump quarters?
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INSIDE
■ How to speak like an on-line pro.
■ Cofes where you can try SF Net.
See Page B5

Mrs. Clinton Picks Inaugural Gown

BY LIZ SMITH
NEWSWAX

Mary Clinton is being fitted in Little Rock for her inaugural gown, designed by the young, homegrown retail Phillips and executed by the great Beverly Hills atelier genius Barbara Matera. The dress is a stretch of embroidery and lace with an overskirt of chiffon. The colors run from lavender to purple.

And because this dress has been put together with the expertise and know-how that goes only into the alter costumes, Clinton has already pronounced: "I have never been so comfortable in a dress in my entire life." This is the first designer dress the first lady-to-be has ever owned.

As designer, many were rumored, but only Phillips '87, who formerly worked for Ralph Lauren and Yves Saint Laurent, was chosen. Phillips, who was born in New York and raised in Ohio, has been described as "adorable and young." She made a yellow silk suit for a Little Rock boutique that was often frequented by Clinton, who bought the suit and wore it during the Democratic National Convention. Ever since, she has seemed to fancy Phillips' "one-person" operation for design.

Los Angeles Times Syndicate

California Ranks High In Child Care

ASSOCIATED PRESS

California may be staggering under the heavy economic slump since the 1980s, but it is among 10 states that lead the nation in quality of child care, Working Mother magazine reports.

The 10 "have all, in various ways, made significant strides in the provision of child care," the magazine says in a report in its February edition.

Besides California, Working Mother cited Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin. They rated the best for health and safety, and for funding child care. A panel rated child-care regulations by a number of objective and subjective criteria, including:

- Quality: The number of children an adult may care for.
 - Availability: The number of state-regulated spaces for children.
 - Health and safety: Including the minimum number of children who must be enrolled before the state regulates family day nurseries and standards and monitoring and enforcement.
 - Commitment: What a state does to encourage high-quality, affordable child care.
- California, for example, rated "Very good" on quality of care.

Dublin Seeks Songs for City Anthem

BY BILL WALLACE
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

While city officials are considering a songwriting competition to select an anthem for their community similar to those already being adopted in several other Bay cities.

The idea surfaced during Monday night's council meeting after Steven King Stewart approached the city with a proposal to write a city anthem.

Stewart, who has already written songs adopted by Fremont, Livermore and Union City, presented to the council a package of endorsements and a demonstration tape.

"The council was impressed by Mr. Stewart's credentials," said City Clerk Kay Keck. "But they were concerned that there might be local residents who also might be interested in writing a song for the city. They didn't want to take any action until they found out whether there was local interest."

As a result, the council decided to float the possibility of a competition. It covered its local newspaper's articles with sufficient interest, Keck said. The winning song would be depicted during Dublin's St. Patrick's celebration in March.

Stewart, a 41-year-old Livermore musician who works as a dental technician, said he is convinced city songs are a good way to build community pride.



Girlband Brand X jeans are worn low and three sizes too big by 16- to 25-year-olds.

There Are Jeans For Every Body

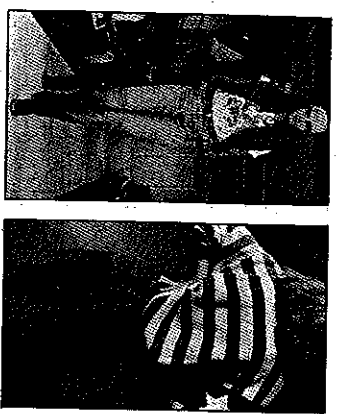
The blue-jeaning of America

BY RICK MARIN
NEW YORK TIMES

We represent a jeans cult. "So reads a T-shirt at the Original Levi's Store, across New York's Lexington Avenue from Bloomingdale's.

Open almost a month, this 6,000-square-foot cathedral of casual wear vaults no fewer than 12 walls of denim.

On a warm winter Wednesday the new Bose-tilt-Levi's ad campaign room from a three-panel video screen, and



Levi's classic 501's are an obsession among foreign tourists.

Levi Strauss & Co.'s chief executive posed for a photo shoot, while the chic young staff gleefully prodded demoralized customers.

"You look confused," a salesclerk said sweetly. "May I help you?" For every generation, the slogan goes, there's a Gap. And for every generation or social class, there's a pair of baggy, straight, bell-bottomed, hip-hung, acid washed faux ponytail.

"I wish large" street slang for the good line, has turned into a style imper-

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