

—Feature—

When it rings — grasp the stars and say 'Hello!'

By ANGELA HAMPTON
Staff Writer

Famous animal personalities such as Snoopy, Mickey Mouse and Garfield have something in common with ordinary items such as razors, beer cans, paper clips and footballs.

They are all members of the rapidly growing population of novelty telephones.

What makes novelty phones so appealing? What is it that lures prospective telephone shoppers to buy NFL football phones that whistle or duck phones that quack?

Karen Smith, a freshman psychology major from Miami, can answer that. While Smith was home for Christmas, she found her current dorm-room telephone — a pair of red hot lips. "It was just unusual, something different to have," she says. "I just saw it and liked it."

Some people develop a strong rapport with their novelty telephones. Diana Snyder, a UNC graduate living in Chapel Hill, says her boyfriend has had his Mickey Mouse phone since graduating from high school in 1982. He got the phone in California and since then has moved it with him all over the country. "It's very easy to use," Snyder says. "Mickey holds the receiver. You just say 'Hey Mickey, hold this,' and he does."

Lips and Mickey represent just a couple of the hundreds of novelty telephones that exist today.

"Probably the first popular (novelty) phones were rental phones," says Linda Herman, vice president of the Telephone Junction in Durham. In the early- to mid-70s, telephone companies sold novelty phone cases, in designs such as Mickey Mouse, for around \$200. But the working parts inside the casing could only be rented. Consequently, Herman says, novelty phones were of extremely high quality.

Since that time, novelty telephone sales have increased tremendously. Seasonal changes affect the demand for phones, says Herman. Christmastime marks the biggest sales, and Easter and Mother's Day

are also busy times for novelty phone stores. Herman says different holidays influence even the color of phones people buy. Red phones, for example, are very popular around Valentine's Day.

Many companies now make novelty phones at prices ranging from \$12 to over \$300. According to Herman, novelty phones in lower price ranges include models of Porsches, Mercedes and Corvettes, money clips, razors, fruits and vegetables, beer and soda cans and animal figurines. Phones in the middle price range (from \$39.95 to \$79.95) include children's characters like Garfield, Kermit the Frog, Snoopy and Mickey Mouse.

But animal personality phones attract more of the public than just children.

Freshman Donna Sellers fell in love with Snoopy when she saw him in a Raleigh phone store window holding a receiver in his arm. "I begged my parents for money to buy it," she says. But when Mom and Dad turned her down, Sellers thought Snoopy was a lost cause. At Christmastime, however, her parents surprised her by giving her the phone as a present.

More expensive phones range from about \$100 to over \$300, Herman says. Included in this category are phones made from onyx, sea shells and see-through lucite, elephant-shaped phones made of brass and even phones built into tables. The list goes on.

Michele Wilson, a sophomore pharmacy major from Wilmington, is the owner of a red, white and blue old-fashioned candlestick phone that Southern Bell no longer makes. Wilson says her family acquired the phone when they moved into their new home. "Years later, I asked mom who picked out this ugly phone, and she said (that) I did." Wilson housed her novelty piece on her dorm-room loft.

"It's awkward to talk into because you have to use both hands," Wilson says. But, she adds, the phone's uniqueness is a real attention-



DTH/Julie Stovall

Sophomore Ginger Penegar uses both hands to communicate on this old-fashioned phone

grabber. "It's kind of a conversation piece."

The most expensive phone Herman has ever heard of was one made entirely of 14-karat gold — one of only 12 models made by the manufacturer. When the phone emerged, the dealer's price tag on it was \$10,000. At this price, a store would have had to sell the phone for at least

\$15,000 to make a profit, according to Herman.

Popular children's toys often inspire phone ideas. The Cabbage Patch phones, which came out right after the dolls became popular, are one example.

Designers and private companies are getting in on the act as well. "Four years ago, many designers were

putting their names on phones — like Pierre Cardin," Herman says. Tyco, a toy manufacturer, makes the Garfield phone and the NFL football phone. One company produced a Statue of Liberty phone for the celebration of the statue's restoration last summer. There are also X-rated phones on the market today, according to Herman.



By MEMSY PRICE
Staff Writer

For those of you not into literature or personal graffiti-creating experiences, song lyrics are where it's at. And we've found that some of those, aside from being just addictive, are pretty dadgum bizarre. Heere goes:

A bit from Laurie Anderson's song "Let x equal x" would make great library graffiti:

"I met this guy/ And he looked like he might have been/ A hat-

check clerk at an ice rink./ Which, in fact, he turned out to be./ And I said: 'Oh boy, right again./ Let x equal x . . . ' Sure.

Tom Lehrer, a songster/comedian of the '60s, provides some great Phillips Hall graffiti. The song is "New Math":

"New math, oh new math,/ It won't do you a bit of good to review math./ It's so simple,/ So very simple/ That only a child can do it . . ."

Grffiti to mark bathrooms that are out of order? How about Sonny and Cher's "I Got You Babe":

"Yeah, you know we don't have a pot, But at least I'm sure of all the things we got./ Babe, I got you babe . . ." (Perhaps this could be written over the sink.)

See, it can just get out of control.

Songs begin to take on new meaning. The nonphilosophical and ridiculous can become meaningful when thought of as graffiti that could be read by thousands.

Savings and Loan graffiti? Yup. Neil Diamond. "Forever in Blue Jeans":

"Money talks./ But it can't sing and dance. And it don't walk . . ."

Classified ad graffiti? Why not? Lou Reed's "Average Guy":

"Average looks, average tastes Average height, an average waist Average in everything I do./ My temperature's 98.2 . . ." Well, maybe this is pushing it.

But wait, there could be a market for this. Maybe "Dear John . . ." letters with lines from Bob Dylan's "Positively" Fourth Street" would

work. Imagine getting a card from an ex that said:

"You've got a lot of nerve/ To say you are my friend/ When I was down/ You just stood there grinning . . ." Ouch.

The possibilities are endless. You say you have a friend who's a country music lover and her husband just died? What could be more appropriate than a wreath adorned with a banner of a George Jones lyric from "He Stopped Loving Her Today":

"He stopped loving her today/ They placed a wreath upon his door . . . or/ And soon they'll carry him away . . ."

Know someone who's a bit tense about finals? Make them feel better by telling them about Carole King's "Smackwater Jack":

"Smackwater Jack, he bought a shotgun/ 'Cause he was in the mood for a confrontation/ He just let it all hang loose./ He didn't think about the noose./ He couldn't take no more abuse, so he shot down the congregation . . ."

Finally, for the song graffiti to top all song graffiti. Guaranteed to confuse even an English major, it's The Beatles' "I Am The Walrus." Here goes:

"Yellow matter custard dripping from a dead dog's eye/ Crabalocker fishwife pornographic priestess boy you been a naughty girl/ You let your knickers down/ I am the eggman/ I am the walrus GOO GOO JOO JOO . . ."