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Fax The Facts

Facsimile (Fax) Machine The Latest In High Technology

By James Heffner

"Send out that order for 2000 widgets, and get a quote on the price. Oh! by the way, order lunch from Gino's and, while you're at it send birthday greetings to my Aunt Martha in Sioux City. Don't take the time or trouble to telephone all that information just fax it."

Want to hear your favorite song on station WXYZ? Send them a fax. Can't wait for the overnight mail? Have that contract faxed.

Make room Webster, here comes the latest verb. Faxing is the act of transmitting everything from birthday greetings to industrial orders to fingerprint files over the latest high-tech gadget, the facsimile machine.

The facsimile machine is a device that sends images across telephone lines at the same price of a telephone call. The page you feed into your machine is converted electronically to a series of barely audible beeps and squeals. The receiving machine decodes the noises, reconstructs the image and prints a copy on a sheet of glossy thermal paper in less time than it takes to relay the same information by voice in most cases. And with increased accuracy.

Massey Hardware has been using a fax machine for about nine months. Massey's is a wholesale distributor of pipe valves and fittings. Owner, Henry Massey is sold on the accuracy point. "We sell a lot of fractional sizes and when you're talking on the phone," said Massey, "sometimes a two and a half inch valve might end up being ordered as a one-half inch valve, whereas, in print that error may never happen."

Strange as it seems fax technology was invented by a Scottish clockmaker, Alexander Bain, in 1842. Bain discovered the principle of a scanner converting a page into sounds and he was able to utilize a crude inking machine to prove his theory. Today, according to Donna Murdoch of the American Facsimile Association, we fax over 82 million pages daily. More and more, these machines are making their way into American households.

In addition to the 850,000 devices being utilized by industry, there were over 20,000 installed in private residences last year. The 1989 total will reach 1.3 million units. There's even a directory on the market with more than 120,000 business and government listings.

Why the rapid growth?

New technology, mostly," said David Wells of Marathon Business Services in Kings Mountain. "These machines are being improved every-day."

Marathon sells and services fax machines in this area. "Research and development is ongoing in the facsimile industry," said Wells. "There are, for example, several different grades and quality of paper. The machines are getting more versatile, too. Some are used for copying as well as transmitting documents. There's a laser machine on the market now that produces copy-machine quality output and stores the received information in a buffer, then shuts the line down while the machine prints out the fax. Company and facsimile machines in one unit that use bond paper are available also, but they're expensive at this juncture."

The use of regular bond paper will be a vast improvement. The thermal coated paper presently used is unpleasant to handle and expensive—about \$20 per roll.

Fax machines cost anywhere from 600 dollars to 5000 dollars but the price is coming down. Never mind the costs, to a company that used them they will eventually pay for themselves. A three page letter faxed from here to the west coast would cost about a dollar versus about twelve dollars by overnight mail.

Carl Sutton, owner of Belmont Industrial Tooling and Supply Company is sold on the cost effectiveness of fax machines. "We've used ours for about a year," he said. "We send and receive orders and we transmit photos of tools and prints. It saves time and prevents errors in part numbers. We fax about seventy-five percent of our purchase orders. Our machine has paid for itself many times over."

They're good for business, also. According to Henry Massey customers will sometimes place orders with those who have fax machines simply because they don't want to sit down and read a long list of items over the telephone.

The Eaton Corporation Transmission Division of Kings Mountain utilizes fax services within about fifteen plants. Eaton's Mary Tuttle uses them extensively. "They're very handy for sending and receiving quotes, plans and especially urgent questions. I send about 35 faxes a day and I guess we receive 20 to 30."

"I sold two machines to a company in Shelby with a subsidiary in the Dominican Republic, and I'm told they paid for themselves in a year," said David Wells.

All is not milk and honey, of course. Where there is a medium of transmission there's misuse, sometimes instigated by the users themselves. A radio station in Tennessee, for example conducted a "fax your fanny" contest. People would sit on their copy machines, take a picture and send it over their fax. The station received over 60 entries. No word on the winner.

The junk faxes are starting to pile up. Some entrepreneurs have acquired a list of fax numbers and are sending a broad range of solicitations including mail room supplies, office equipment, yellow page ads and even advertisements for other fax machines. And the mass marketers love it. A direct mail firm in California estimates they are receiving a 6.75 response rate on faxed ads where the normal mail order rate of return is about one percent.

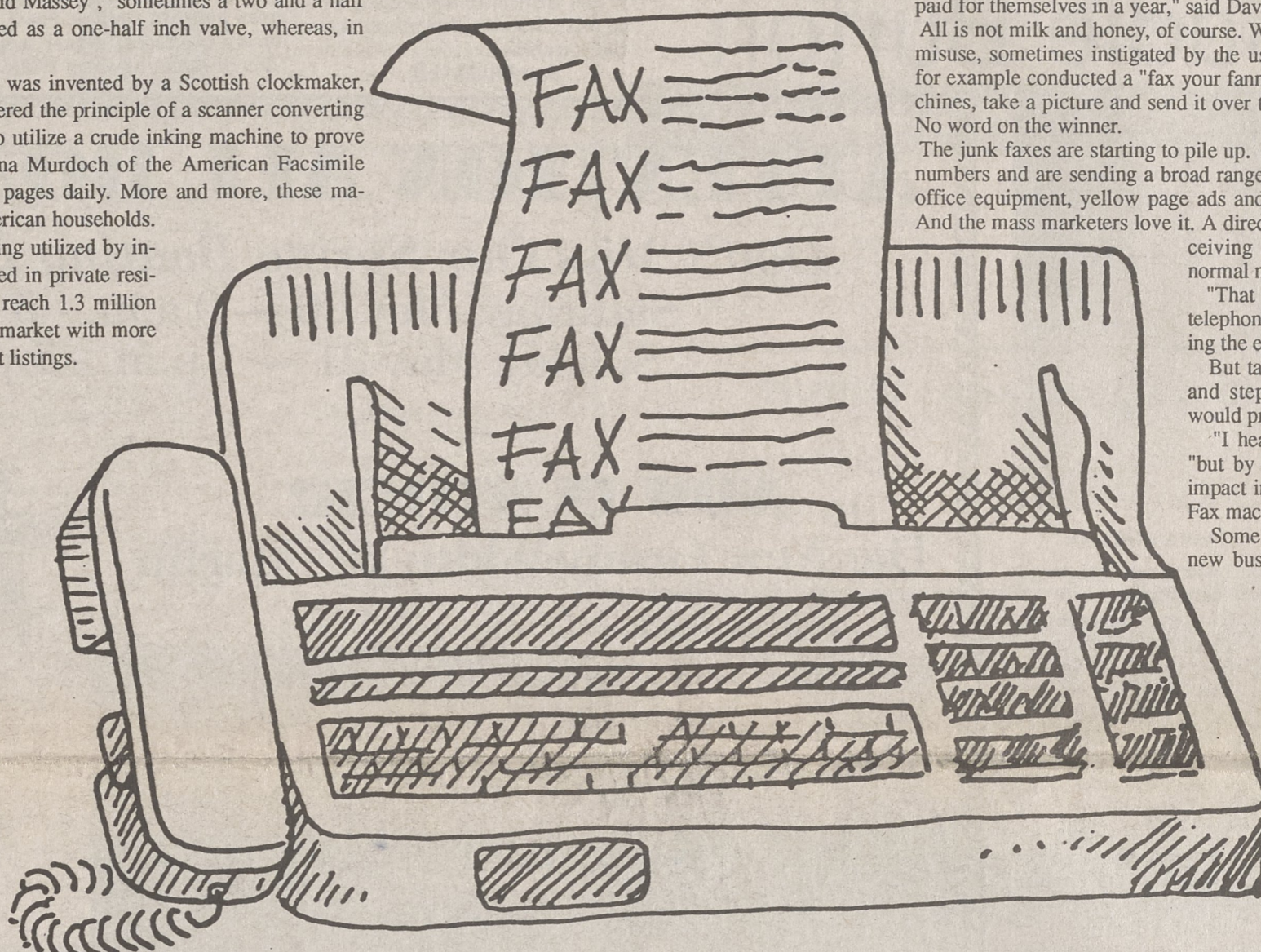
"That can get expensive," said Wells. "It ties up your telephone line and your machine not to mention wasting the expensive paper you must use."

But take heart. Most states know about the situation and steps are being taken to create legislation that would prevent or limit unsolicited fax messages.

"I heard about one fax dating service," said Wells, "but by and large, the junk faxes haven't made a big impact in this part of the country yet. But who knows? Fax machines are limited only by the imagination."

Some fast thinkers around the country have created new businesses with their fax machines, offering fax services for about \$5 for the first page and \$2 per page thereafter. The same companies will receive faxes for about one dollar per page, and that's all gravy. The sending party pays for the phone call and the receiver's only expense is about ten cents per page for the paper. A few firms will send your fax overseas for something on the order of \$8 a page average.

So the fax machine boom some people predicted twenty years ago has finally arrived. The horizon seems to be unlimited. Chances are that, in a few short years, they'll be as plentiful as VCR's.



Ah, Do You Remember These?



TALK ABOUT OLD TIMES—Marie Falls Devinney, left, and Lillian Fisher Ware of Clearwater, Fla. chat about old times during a reunion of the KMHS Class of 1939.



WELCOMES VISITORS—Dan Finger, left, welcomes Mrs. Crowell Little of Chapel Hill and Mrs. W. T. Weir to the 50th reunion of the Class of 1939. Mrs. Weir was a teacher and Mrs. Little's husband the high school football team.

The year was 1939—do you remember?

It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. It was the era of Hitler. The world was coming out of an economic depression; the world was heading into a war. The past was viewed with distaste; the future was anticipated with fear.

The last generation of that era, the Class of '39 was graduating high school. In Kings Mountain the class was composed of 66 young 16 and 17-year-olds with new high school diplomas, eagerly awaiting to step forward in an uncertain time. They went—each in his and her own direction.

May 6, 1989 on the 50th anniversary of their high school prom night and a half century after receiving their high school diplomas, 26 members of the class and their spouses returned to Kings Mountain for a reunion.

"And what a reunion that was!" exclaimed organizers Mary Helen Patrick and Dan Finger.

"Who said you can't go home again? We did and it was great!" said Mrs. Patrick who noted that for one brief moment in time they were all 16 and 17 year olds again as they recounted fond memories during a "Do You Remember?" party which opened three days of activities at Holiday Inn.

The 1939ers also visited their old alma mater, now Central School, and visited former classmates in this area.

Saturday evening, May 6, was the big night and the music of "Carolina's Finest" brought back memories of the Big Band Sound. They danced to such oldies as "Stardust," "Moonlight Serenade," "Woodchoppers Ball" and "There'll Never Be Another You" invoking memories of the Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey Band, Glenn Miller Orchestra, Harry James and other big names from the era.

The Class of 1939 provided at least five sweetheart couples who married. They were Mary Helen Hambright and Lawrence Patrick, who provided the dance music for the big night; Dan and Dot Finger; Maude Plonk and Tom Harper; Hazel Falls and Jones Fortune and A. B. and Helen Falls. Dan Finger got the idea to invite the class members back to Kings Mountain and Mary Helen Patrick was chairman of the general planning committee which also included Kings Mountain members of the class.

The Class of 1939 was the last class to graduate in the 11th grade. Three members of the Class of '39 went on to prep school after high school graduation: Lawrence Patrick, Paul Neisler Jr. and Mary Helen Hambright. Many went away to college. Two members of the class died in World War II while serving with the USAF. They were James Nickels and James Darracott. Nickel's sister, Nancy Nickels, now of Charlotte, sent flowers for the occasion in memory of her brother.



REUNION DANCE—Mary Helen Patrick enjoys the music of the Big Band Sound with Jones Fortune as Sue Ruddock and Dan Finger dance to the music along with Mr. and Mrs. Jim Anthony.

Eighteen members of the Class of '39 died. The 26 returning class members came from as far away as Tennessee, Florida and Virginia.

Special guests for the reunion activities were former teachers Josephine E. Weir and Peggy Craig and her husband, Bill Craig; Helen Hendricks, all of Kings Mountain, and Mr. and Mrs. Crowell Little of Chapel Hill. Little coached football at KMHS in 1939. The mascot for the class of 1939, Phyllis Ware Austin, and husband, Gene, were also special guests.

Don Bridges was principal of KMHS in 1939 and B. N. Barnes, now of Lumberton, was superintendent. The Class of 1939 prepared the first yearbook and the class motto was "Ambition Has No Rest."

"We can't literally turn back the clock of time—only in our memories—but it was fun to play, once again, "do you remember," said Mrs. Patrick.

"Among unabashed tears and cheers, it was pure magic," she said.

Returning for the Class of 1939 reunion were Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Anthony, Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Patterson, Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Goforth, Mr. and Mrs. Jones Fortune, Sue Ruddock, Mr. and Mrs. Dan Finger, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Wright Jr., Lillian Fisher Ware, Mr. and Mrs. M. D. Phifer, Virginia Falls Hardin, Mr. and Mrs. Stough Devenney, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Whetstone, Helen Cloninger Price, Sara Proctor Chaney, Jeanette Smith Clark, Margaret Mitcham Williams, Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Patrick, Pat and O. C. Kiser, Mr. and Mrs. Coley Campbell, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Walker, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Tobias, Mr. and Mrs. O. E. Sedberry and Mr. and Mrs. Willie Lee Thompson.

"It was great fun to take that stroll down memory lane," said Mrs. Patrick.