

COMMENTARY

FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 1995

IN PRAISE OF E-MAIL

Editors, Vineyard Gazette:

Arthur Railton seems to have missed the point about E-mail (Vineyard Gazette, Feb. 10). The "E" doesn't stand for "efficient" or "empty." The medium is not the message.

Mr. Railton seems to take great pride in the fact that he spends weeks, even months, responding to the occasional letter. Well, that's fine for him. If Mr. Railton had an electronic address, he could still spend weeks or months contemplating his replies before hitting the "send" button.

But we must take issue with Mr. Railton saying that E-mail is not filled with "leisurely love" and "joy." Our experience was quite different.

A year and a half ago, in the middle of a whirlwind courtship, we were separated by thousands of miles and 14 time zones for a month. Less than six weeks after we met, Simson was called away to Tokyo on a month-long business trip.

During that time, our only communication was by electronic mail. In Tokyo each morning, Simson wrote long love letters to Beth and sent them away through the Internet to a computer sitting in Cambridge. Every night when Beth came home from work, there were Simson's letters from the day before. It was 7 p.m. in Cambridge, and 9 a.m. in Tokyo, and Simson had already started another full day of work.

A few hours later, the process reversed itself. Beth wrote a love letter to Simson and sent it away. That evening, when Simson checked his electronic mailbox in Tokyo, there was Beth's letter.

During this time, we wrote more than 300 pages of thoughtful and sometimes passionate correspondence. The Internet certainly "warmed the cockles" of our hearts, and then some. We were engaged the day after Simson returned from Tokyo, and married last October.

If Mr. Railton ever does break down and get an Internet account, he might enjoy looking at our online wedding album, with over 100 full-color photographs. The URL is <http://pleasant.cambridge.ma.us/wedding/>. He can even sign our guest book — electronically!

Simson Garfinkel and
Beth Rosenberg

Cambridge

In the 1930s, during the hard times
Depression, came the Federal Writers