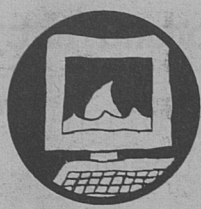


## CYBER



## SHARK

BY MIKI THOMAS

Let me take this moment to make an exciting announcement. *Out in the Mountains* has its own mailing list called VTPRIDENET. People all over the state are enjoying this list and making real connections with one another. "A mailing what?" you may ask. Does this mean I will be inundated with junk mail or disturbed at suppertime by a telemarketer begging me to change long distance carriers? Is a mailing list the same thing as a BBS, chat

# Conversations Online

room or a newsgroup?

Actually, the mailing list is not a list of *OITM* subscribers that is sold to direct marketing firms to fill up your snail mail box full of future recyclables. It is also not to be confused with BBS's, chat rooms, or newsgroups although they are all forms of person-to-person communication on the Internet. Using the mailing list as an example, I hope to clear the air about what each of those terms mean.

A mailing list is a focused discussion group disseminated

through email. To join a mailing list, you would have to subscribe. In the case of the VTPRIDENET, mailing list, you can either look for on the [www.queer.net](http://www.queer.net) web site or email to [majordomo@queer.net](mailto:majordomo@queer.net).

Because these lists are operated by computers, you need to type specific instructions in your message. So, to subscribe to VTPRIDENET, you need to type "subscribe vtpridenet," in the message body without the quotation marks of course. Then you will receive a message from the administrator asking to confirm your subscription to VTPRIDENET. This is to assure the list operator that you really want to be on the list and weren't subscribed by a 'friend.' Follow the given instructions to a tee or else you would be dropped even before you even start.

Once you confirm, you will receive a welcome message giving you instructions regarding commands and netiquette, as well as more information about the list. It will also give you the email address used to join in the discussion. Usually that address is different than the address used for subscribing or unsubscribing to a list. It is a good idea to print this message because you don't want to be on the receiving end of a flame because you sent "unsubscribe" to the discussion address and not to the administrator's.

On the other hand, you have BBS's and newsgroups that are

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also focused around a particular topic. The difference between them and a mailing list is how they are disseminated through the Internet. A BBS or a bulletin board system is often accessible through either a telephone number or telnet. It is one way that some net surfers have found to access the Internet cheaply. BBS's are sometimes operated by a local individual or group so that any information or discussion is usually geographically focused. If you are lucky, the sysop or systems operator would be able to add "echoes" or BBS's from other areas so that not only are you able to "talk" to people in your area, you can also join in discussions around the world.

Newsgroups make up what is known as the Usenet. The Usenet is not a part of the Internet per se and is only accessible if the Internet provider or BBS has newsfeeds offering a number of available newsgroups you can subscribe to. Subscribing to a newsgroup is as simple as clicking on its name. To read newsgroups, you need a newsreader that either lists posts, i.e. messages, chronologically or by thread. Because the Usenet is not based in a huge monolithic centralized computer, posts do not always appear the minute they are sent. You are at the mercy of how often Internet providers pick up posts.

Chat rooms are perhaps the most controversial aspect of the Internet if only for the bad press they have gotten. However, for

every busted up marriage or child molester caught in the act, there are millions around the world "chatting" about wholesome activities like flower arrangement and such. Chat rooms operate in "real time," that is, the here and now. There's no waiting for responses to your message or post. You get responses instantly, as if you are having a conversation. The most popular protocol used in most chat software is IRC or Internet Relay Chat. It allows you to access any IRC channel in the Internet. Depending on the software you use, you can hide your identity as you enter a chat room through the use of cartoon characters and handles (think CD radio). You can also respond to the nature of the discussion by clicking on one of several cartoon faces representing such emotions as amusement and boredom.

I, myself, have had good experiences with mailing lists and newsgroups. The Internet has allowed me to connect with others with similar interests. Thanks to one mailing list, I now have a cyberpal from England with whom I exchange emails. Newsgroups about music have helped me locate information about obscure Calypso singers. Indeed, no other communications medium could accomplish what a few strokes on the keyboard could do in a matter of minutes in terms of reaching the world. ▼

## SOURCE MATERIAL:

To learn more about mailing lists, BBS's, newsgroups, and chat rooms, check out the following books and magazines. Net Guide was published by Michael Wolfe & Company but from what I understand it is no longer in the publishing business. Too bad because the introduction to Net Guide was excellent in describing the many aspects of the Internet. Harley Hahn practically invented the Internet guide book and his *Internet and World Wide Web Yellow Pages* are indispensable resources. PC Novice every so often publishes guides to the Internet, World Wide Web, and various web browsers that are easy to read and inexpensive. You can find those in the magazine racks.

## STARGAZER

Cast your vote for a winner this November when more than a few planets traverse strategic Scorpio to electable Sag. But don't let victory go to your head, cousin; there are transits to both Pluto and Saturn this month that will prick any inflated ego. By the end of the month, you could be eating crow rather than turkey.

### ARIES

(MARCH 21 - APRIL 20)

Feeling lost? Proud Rams may be forced to adjust their personal compasses this November when even minor tremors on the job reverberate on the Richter scale. Reestablish your personal magnetism by the 13th when lucky Jupiter changes course but be prepared to overturn some established life tenets after the 20th. A new broom sweeps clean or at least pushes the dust around.

### TAURUS

(APRIL 21 - MAY 21)

Gay Bulls are hot to trot this November but should be careful not to trot into their own smelly piles. Friendships may be strained around the 10th when your party hearty proclivities upset pals' plans. By the 20th, you realize that the

dreamboat who cruised into your port may be a destroyer. However you happen to pack a fairly big gun yourself.

### GEMINI

(MAY 22 - JUNE 21)

It's difficult to climb the corporate ladder when you have family ties that tightly bind. The straight jacket loosens around the 10th but then queer Twins are faced with partnership issues as Pluto conjuncts the Sun around the 20th. If it's not one thing it's another, cousin; Maybe all you need is a little quiet time away from all the stuffed turkeys and baked hams.

### CANCER

(JUNE 22 - JULY 23)

Pink Crabs don't usually shoot from the lip, but you can't help it this November. Innocuous things you let slip before the 13th hit global proportions and overturn the landscape. This may not be a bad thing, friend; Sometimes you have to burn down the old shack to build a new pink palace. Expect major changes at work around the 20th. You may move from worker ant to queen bee.

### LEO

(JULY 24 - AUGUST 23)

Love for sale? Check the price before you buy, queer Lion. Gutsy Jupiter over-

charges you before the 13th but will exceed your wildest temptations after that. Play hard compadre, but recognize your limitations; the Sun conjuncts Pluto around the 20th and delivers more fun than you can easily handle. Exactly how much can you handle, pal?

### VIRGO

(AUGUST 24 - SEPTEMBER 23)

Expect to deal with the yin yang of relationships during the first two weeks of November. How much of yourself are you prepared to give up to form a partnership? Mergers and acquisitions may take place towards the end of the month, possibly resulting in a change of residence. Isn't it about time you gave up that naugahyde day glow orange ottoman?

### LIBRA

(SEPTEMBER 24 - OCTOBER 23)

Feed your inner soul this November. Nirvana can be attained through a heaping bowl of ice cream...or is it through frenetic exercise... or is it through contemplative meditation? Crack the cosmic egg after the 13th when Jupiter goes direct. Well-placed words pack a punch after the 20th. Fire off a media missive that catapults the rainbow cause. You'll be heard if you shout Out.

### SCORPIO

(OCTOBER 24 - NOVEMBER 22)

Everything you value will be held up for inspection this November. What you find is that what you value the most in your life doesn't cost very much. Such revelations abound after the 20th. Before that, gay Scorps may become too wrapped up in meeting others' expectations. Remember, you only have to live up to your own standards, low and lurid as they may be.

### SAGITTARIUS

(NOVEMBER 23 - DECEMBER 22)

The trade off between a happy home life and a demanding career makes itself evident in early November. Balance is everything gay Sag so juggle those balls and smile a lot. All may tumble though around the 20th when your Sun conjuncts Pluto. Volcanic changes occur especially in how you appear to others. Is piercing your forehead a fashion statement?

### CAPRICORN

(DECEMBER 23 - JANUARY 20)

How accurate is your intuition? Gay Caps may be tempted to go to the Outer limits through most of November but will find static on the psychic line before the 20th. No matter what though, open

up lines of communication with family members after the 13th and make this Thanksgiving an all Out affair, thanks to Jupiter. Only the turkey should be stuffed and trussed.

### AQUARIUS

(JANUARY 21 - FEBRUARY 19)

You are voted most likely to this November when spicy Mars opposes expansive Jupiter. But all that hot unfettered sex will prove to be more expensive than first thought both emotionally and fiscally. Aqueerians reassess their social circle after the 20th. Are you kanooding with the A list or with something lower on the alphabet? (But if A stands for asshole, buy another vowel.)

### PISCES

(FEBRUARY 20 - MARCH 20)

Pink Fish may experience an expansion this November thanks to unbridled Jupiter. If clothes no longer fit, buy a new wardrobe and call it a new look. Check out the progress of your career after the 20th when Pluto unleashes transforming changes and, dare I say, once in a lifetime professional opportunities. Please be kind to all of us drones in the mailroom.