

by Andrea Bockman

I'm oriented, you're oriented

This year's freshman on the street can be easily spotted by an open expression in the eyes, a slack in the jaw, and the piercing mating call used by both the males and females --the nervous giggle.

So how was I, girl reporter for large metropolitan newspaper, supposed to elicit any sort of meaningful comment on the current Freshman Orientation?

DECIDING that I had to be sneaky and cunning, I walked up to a freshman I knew and deviously said, "What do you think of this whole orientation bit?" Blank stare. I realized that I was being too subtle. "Do you feel that you know Macalester better for having gone through this segment of the orientation procedure?" A gleam appeared in the freshman's eye, his lips began to twitch, and finally he said, "Yup!" My mistake. You ask

a yup or nope question and you get a yup or nope answer. By this time a few more familiar faces had gathered around and the conversation became livelier. Obviously I had a superior crop of freshmen.

"Why is there a separate orientation for minority students? Sure, there might be a difficult adjustment to be made by them, but if their orientation is so separate, how will they ever get into the swing of the whole college?"

I was relieved to hear that eventually the college will swing, but I did not have any comforting platitudes to give to the boy.

"You know, there's an awful lot to do here, and I'm beat. I definitely need more sleep."

HEAR THAT, Orientation planners of the future? Schedule more sleep.

"Gosh, I couldn't stand those exams. So long, so dull, and probably totally unnecessary."

This last comment ignited the spark needed to make everyone talk. Yes, yes, those tests were awful, weren't they? And, isn't this orientation thing going on too long? We have huge blocks of time with nothing to do. Those blocks of time were probably to be used as "getting -to-know-you" sessions. As for

me, they were "gee, I wish I had the guts to get to know you" periods.

"**SOME OF THESE** freshmen are really snobby. You smile at them and they just stare at you."

"Well, maybe they're shy." I volunteered this statement myself. Personal experience, you see.

"Well, I think it's just the greatest bunch of people I've ever met. They're really friendly and so helpful."

I BEGAN THE walk back to my dorm. "Well, what did the orientation do for you, kid?" I asked myself. I did get to know some professors, I got to eat ice cream at Farrell's, and I did become familiar with the campus. But then again, nothing will fall in place until classes begin. Yeah, I felt pretty well-oriented. I looked around. I was walking in the wrong direction.

In a never-ending battle to improve the efficiency of the dining commons, William "Mac" Macdonald, food service director, has made an almost unprecedented move. Going the way of all "mass feeders" as he so aptly termed it, Mother Saga is now automating its service system.

A little blue machine manufactured by the Valdyne Company is the latest addition to the Saga arsenal. This year as we go through the Saga line we will find this amazing little machine. When a meal ticket with a picture is inserted into the correct slot, the machine will check the correct number for that meal. If the card has not been used for that meal everything will be fine. However, if someone, unbeknownst to that student, has spirited away the meal ticket, used it and returned it to him (it happened often last year) the machine will flash on an amber light, a small buzzer will sound off and he will be shot.

WHILE THIS MAY seem somewhat harsh to many of our Mac students, an understanding of the inner workings of Saga might help in realizing the need for maximum food service security systems.

To obtain all the facts, this reporter was able to obtain an exclusive interview with someone who had been inside Saga most of his latter life. Through the eyes of this individual, students should be able to get a better feel for the difficulties of mass food preparation.

I met Rupert Webb at the condiments table last week. His lanky frame emerged from underneath a lettuce leaf. Two of his legs were free but the remaining six had become enmeshed in the thin strands of cabbage which comprised the cabbage slaw I had been about to dish out. I won his trust by removing the troublesome vegetation from his appendages and insisted that he join me for lunch. I offered him some of my medium rare chicken but he declined. "I'll just munch on anything that comes along," he assured me. (At this point he lassoed an errant fruit fly.)

RUPERT HAD BEEN with Saga for two weeks and was already "fed-up." "You would not believe the problems they have down there. Many times even I go out to eat," he explained.

Rupert is only one of several unofficial food inspectors who take it upon themselves to see that you get more with every mouthful. Many of his colleagues have sacrificed themselves in the line of duty because of this high principle.

In his position, Rupert says he has been with many food services throughout the state. "Despite their problems, few have either the selection or the quality of Saga. The

only problem is, there is just too much extra." Also, there are occasional accidents even in the best of places. Often these accidents, humorously referred to as meals, may be slightly damaging, but never fatal.

RUPERT CONFIDED in me that the last thing he wanted to see was a more efficient serving system. According to Rupert, "The more excess food, the better. Flies are getting harder to find this time of year."

In a meeting with RA's, SHA's and some administration members, Mac (you remember, the food service director) gave a demonstration of the machine and its capabilities. Accurate counts of numbers of students may be obtained and this will enable the cooks to prepare exact amounts of food for a given meal.

Also the obvious security benefits are something to be taken into account. "If this machine stops three people trying to sneak in each day, it will pay for itself," Mac sighed.

AS WONDERFUL as it is, however, the machine will not have a direct effect on the taste of the basic Saga offering. But there is hope that the general spirit of conquest and endeavor which has been roused by this new device will spread like a plague and slowly but surely infect and saturate the meals themselves. Soon, unofficial inspectors like Rupert will be out of a job. Even now, it is rumored that many of them are being relegated to less prominent positions in the Saga organization.

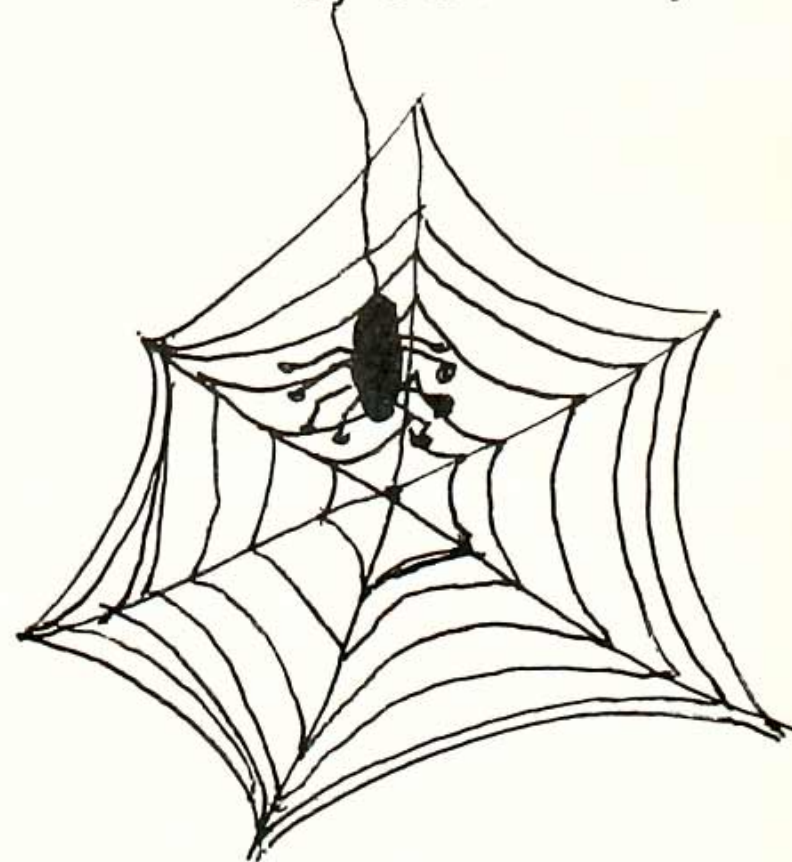
But as a professional, Rupert agreed that an efficient food service, while destroying his way of life, seems to be the direction that most of the better food services are taking. "We've come a long way since the five loaves, two fishes and half a Big Barney," Rupert chuckled.

Suddenly he got very serious. "These last two weeks have been very beautiful for me, and I hate to see it end. One minute I'm at the top of the heap, I can write my own ticket, there's no star too high for me to reach; and the next second, coffee grounds, cold okra and an old carrot stick is the best I can hope for. It's somehow just not fair. That blasted machine hasn't got a sensitive feeler in its whole..."

Rupert broke down at this point and I thought it best to leave him alone. I regret to report that Rupert is no longer with Saga, or anyone else for that matter. Last week, late one night, he stole quietly into Dayton Hall and hopped into bed with Chuck Young, hoping to escape from campus. (There was talk that Chuck might be joining the staff at Mayo. Some nonsense about a medical first and a pectoralis

Come into my parlor: a web of Saga

by Carl Lumbly



"His lanky frame emerged from underneath a lettuce leaf."



Photo by Richard Viets

major...). Anyway, as cruel fate would have it, plucky Rupert was struck down by the mighty helmet of Gary Fitzgerald as he nestled inside Chuck's shoulder pads.

IN MEMORY of this gallant arachnid, a fruit fly buffet will be served to anyone interested and hardy enough to ask for one. Hurry, the supply is limited.