



My first-ever boyfriend dumped me over the phone during spring break my sophomore year of high school.

I called my friend Emily sobbing. "How could he just ditch me over the phone?" I cried. "He didn't even have the guts to do it in person!"



**Cari Gervin**  
Commentary

I made a vow then that I would never break up with someone via telephone. It's a vow I have kept. (If you've only been out with someone once, it hardly counts as "breaking up," right?)

I never thought that 12 years later I would again get dumped in such an impersonal manner. But in 1993 I hadn't heard of e-mail.

This spring, on my 28th birthday, my boyfriend sent me an e-mail at 9 a.m. that effectively ended our relationship. I had planned to move to Nashville, where he lived, in April. He decided that he did not want me in the same city and let my AOL account know before me. (Yet another reason to despise AOL.)

I promptly called his cell phone, and he officially dumped

# A 21st-century breakup

## Being dumped by e-mail seems cowardly somehow

me. It was not the best way to start a day, much less a birthday.

I have not talked to my ex on the phone since those days immediately following our breakup — a good thing, in retrospect. Sure, I tried to call a few times. But he has Caller ID, so he didn't answer, even when I used \*67 to block my number.

We sent nasty e-mails back and forth, of course. I have now stopped responding, even though he thinks we can still be friends and keeps forwarding annoying "funny" e-mails.

Worst. Breakup. Ever.

What I realized through all the tears is that a 21st-century breakup is hard. As if it weren't

miserable enough to miss the other person, you also have to miss multiple methods of communication with him.

You don't just scratch him out in your address book, but you delete him from your cell phone and your home phone and your Friendster friends and your MySpace friends and your work e-mail address book and your personal e-mail account and that other e-mail you never use and ... you can't get rid of someone's information.

After I deleted my ex from my cell phone, it was easy to stop calling him — it's not like I actually knew his phone number.

I deleted him from my Buddy List, too (but only after I didn't see his screen name pop up for weeks, leading me to think that he had blocked his screen name from showing up on my list).

I still can't bring myself to delete him from my Palm, even though his address has changed. What if I really do need to call him, like if I visit Nashville and I stay with my friend Susan and she gets kidnapped and I don't know anyone else in the city except my relatives and it is after 9 p.m., so they are already asleep?

See BREAKUP, Page E6

# Breakup

● Continued from Page E1

OK, maybe I should delete him from my Palm.

But even if I do, I know that I can always Google him or look him up in the online white pages. Wouldn't it be easier to never be able to find the other person again? To wonder what happened to him years from now and not be able to find him on a Web site?

As I was packing up my house three months ago to move back to Chattanooga for my new job, I came across my old address book. I picked it up, and scraps of paper fluttered to the ground — addresses and phone numbers that I had never gotten around to writing down.

There, on the back of a receipt, was my ex-boyfriend's number — a phone number long disconnected, a number from when we first met and neither of us had cell phones and we were just friends — a number I probably never even used because we usually e-mailed each other.

I kept that scrap of paper. I know I should throw it away. Someday, hopefully, I will.

But to see his handwriting, to remember the days when both of us thought cell phones were annoying and unnecessary — well, some things are worth holding on to.