

Prodigy beats students and IBM to the root of math problems

By ED PIWOWARCZYK

York students did no better than IBM or Univac computers when they tried to challenge the calculating prowess of Shakuntla Devi Tuesday afternoon in Curtis lecture hall 'L'.

Devi, a 32-year old woman from south India, dazzled the crowd with her rapid and accurate calculation of problems dealing with roots, factorials, dates and the calendar.

Cautioning the audience that her demonstration "should not be passed off as mere intellectual entertainment," Devi asked for problems to be submitted on slips of paper, which she arranged into categories in order to start with the smaller numbers and "build up concentration for the larger numbers."

To her mind, it was harder to multiply two factorials rather than finding the fourth root of a 40 digit number. (For those interested, the fourth root of 9999999990000000000599999999960000000001 is 9,999,999,999.)

At times, Ken Turner, brought along to corroborate Devi's answers with a calculator, had trouble keeping up

with the woman's rapid-fire answers.

Devi also took time to point out the errors in some of the submitted questions as well as pointing out some of the steps that would normally be used to arrive at the answers.

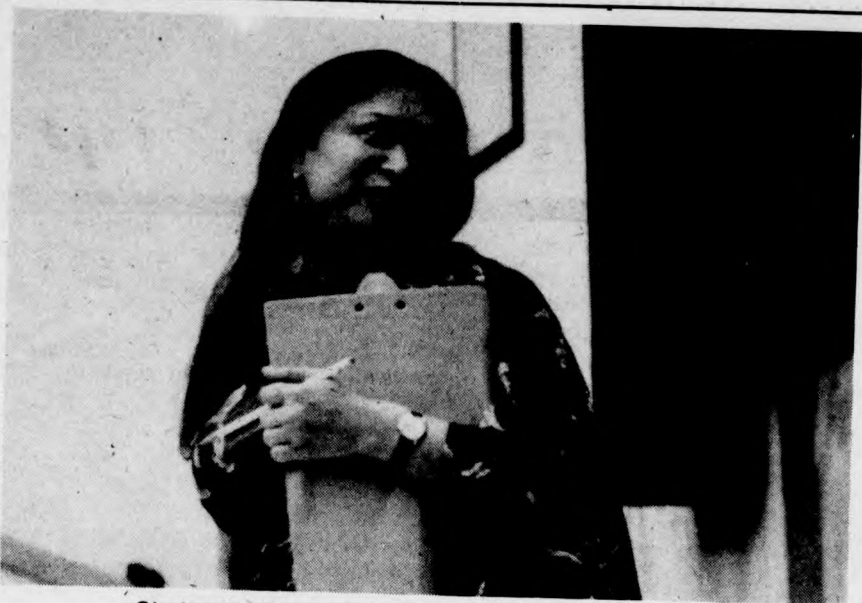
NO FORMAL SCHOOLING

Devi calls her ability "a gift" she has been using since the age of three. She says she has not gone to school and has no formal education.

Although Devi says she has not personally met anyone of comparable ability, mathematics professor Lee Lorch, who met Devi in Stockholm in 1969, says, "It's not unknown but it's very rare."

Professor Bob Burns, who has read about other calculating prodigies in W. Rouse Ball's *Mathematical Recreations*, said after watching Devi: "Comparing her with reports in this book, she's as good or better than the best calculating prodigies that there have been."

"The problems that the others solved were very similar, but not as well done or not as complicated."



Shakuntla Devi, math wizard calculates at Curtis.

Gripe gatherers now at Information York booth

By SUSAN COOPER

"I want to make the first complaint," Lee Lorch, mathematics professor, told Denys Brown, co-manager of the new campus complaint bureau.

She protested that the appropriate forms were not yet ready, but Lorch persisted. "I suggest that the cafeteria put up a big sign saying: God is dead — he ate here."

Denys chuckled as Lorch pointed out that the quality of Versa food wasn't really a laughing matter. The first complaint had been unofficially registered.

Brown expects that it will not be the last complaint on the state of campus dining.

The complaint bureau, which is operating through Information York on an experimental basis for the balance of the term, is accepting complaints and suggestions on any aspect of the university and its services.

Complaints must be hand-written or typed on forms in triplicate which will be provided in the Information booth.

The new service came about as a result of a meeting last January of the Student Services Commission (which gave birth to Information York) when it decided there should be some place

where a student could go to register a complaint and be sure it would get through to the appropriate person.

However, John Becker, assistant to the vice-president, and Denys Brown who handle the service are not promising action — only a response. Under the new system Information York will undertake only to transmit the written complaint to the proper authority and press for a reply within ten days.

"The complaint bureau will show where we may be falling down. Whether anything comes out of it or not will be most interesting," Brown said.

Pro-refugee picketers at old City Hall

By WALKER JONES

Thirty demonstrators picketed last Wednesday afternoon in front of Old City Hall where fourteen members of the Chile Solidarity Committee were to be tried in connection with a sit-in at the federal immigration office in mid-November.

The sit-in, which resulted in the fourteen arrests for petty trespassing, was held to demand that political refugee status be granted to all persons affected by the coup; that political and economic pressure be put on the Chilean junta to grant safe conduct to refugees in Santiago embassies; that there be an airlift of exiles from Chile; that the Canadian ambassador, Andrew Ross, be fired; and that the Canadian government call upon the military junta to release Luis Corvalan (leader of the Chilean Communist Party) and Luis Vitale (leader of the Fourth International in Chile and a noted Marxist intellectual).

After marching and leafletting for half an hour, the courthouse picketers joined the defendants inside where trial was delayed three-quarters of an hour because official documents stating names, addresses and charges were lost by the court and had to be retyped.

When the case was finally called many of the defendants' supporters were physically prevented by police from entering the courtroom, while others inside were told to leave.

The trial was remanded to March 5th.

VOLUNTEERS are needed to work with a non-profit, non-sectarian tutorial service. Future Opportunity Tutorial Service is directed towards those in need of extra tutorial service, but cannot afford the cost of private tuition. The service is provided free of charge and most of those served are newly-arrived immigrant families who need help to adapt to the Canadian school system.

If you are qualified to tutor in mathematics, sciences, english or remedial reading and interested in working with grade school and secondary school students, contact A. Ben-Issac at 633-1224.

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