

# Women gain acceptance in ambulance service

By MAGGIE HANNAH  
Herald staff writer

Patching up cuts and bruises is one of those jobs mothers have been doing for centuries and no one thinks twice about a nurse's capabilities, yet when a woman hops out of an ambulance there are still those whose eyebrows rise. And when two women appear they get really worried.

Donna Massena, Ursula Koritko and Selina Thwaites say that there is still a bit of scepticism from certain members of the Georgetown Volunteer Ambulance Service but they are accepted as part of the town's volunteer service well for the most part.

"One day Floyd Longbottom and I were picking up a man to go to the city from Georgetown hospital," Mrs. Massena says, "and when I stepped into the driver's seat he asked Floyd if he was going to let me drive. Some of the men still get up tight about a woman driver."

Floyd Longbottom, one of the full time ambulance attendants with the Brampton ambulance service which the Ministry of Health has sent to man the Georgetown service during the day, says he finds the women just as competent to work with as men. Even when it comes to lifting patients, he doesn't worry.

The lifts come with training and practise and the women have the know-how just as well as the men.

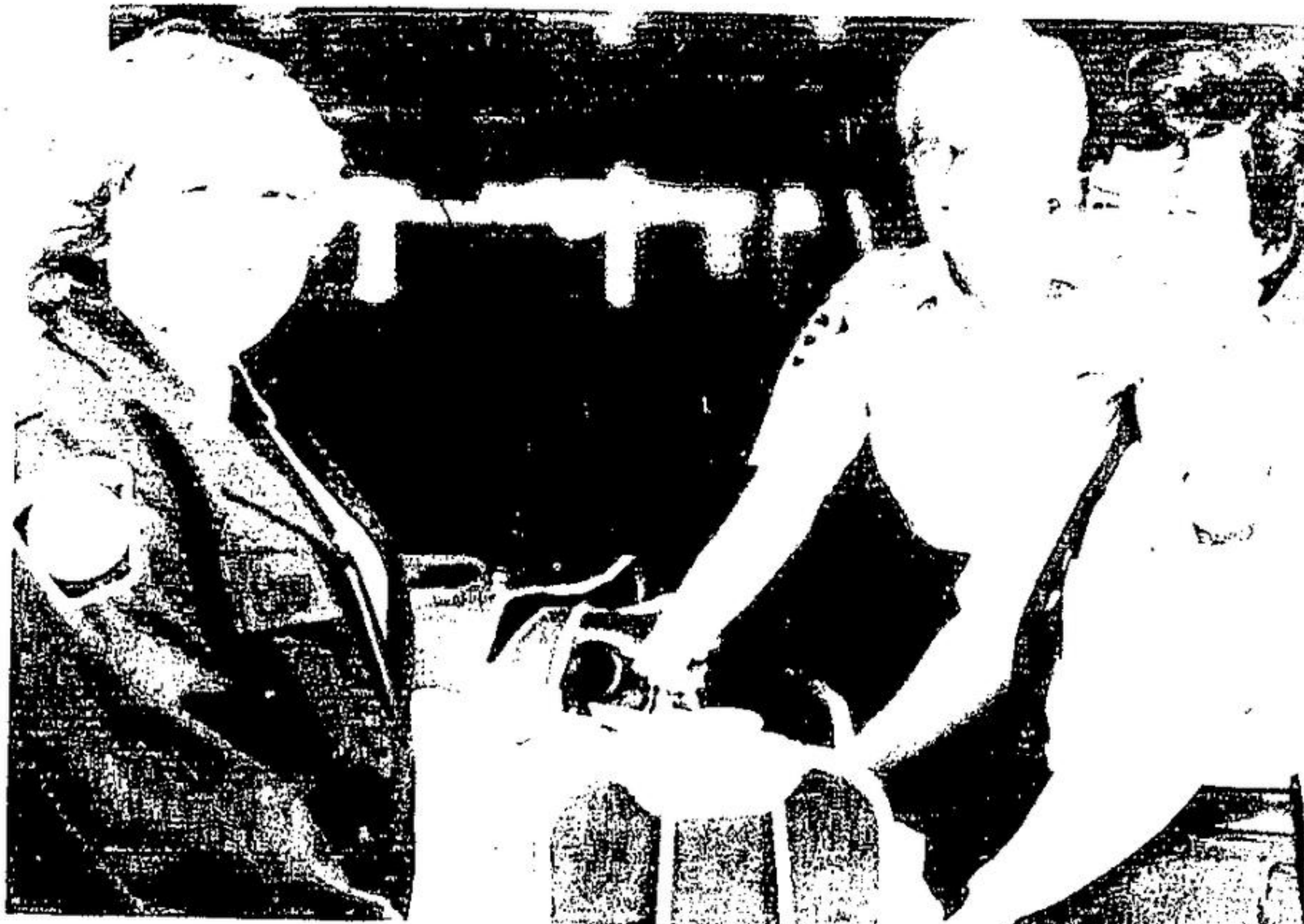
## NO TROUBLE

Mrs. Massena recalls once when she and one of the men were called to the arena to pick up an injured hockey player. Despite his apparent size they had no trouble heaving him off the ice and into the ambulance. The next time she encountered one of the arena attendants he informed her he had been going to offer to help lift the man but thought better of it when he saw her in action.

"I'm not going to mess with you any more," he said," Mrs. Massena chuckled.

Mrs. Koritko agrees that know-how is all important and strength isn't enough.

"We got a call one night to pick up a guy," she says. "He must have weighed 350 pounds. I don't care what his wife tried to tell us about him weighing



Selina Thwaites, Donna Massena and Ursula Koritko are familiar with all the equipment including the stretcher used by the Georgetown Volunteer Ambulance Service members in

performing their emergency and routine work. A fourth woman, Lorna Sayers, has also joined the service but is still in her probationary period.

really rough." The three women refer to themselves as the Three Musketeers since they often work together. Although the Ministry of Health has provided a crew for day-time hours the volunteers provide the back up crew during the day and man the night shifts themselves. Crew members have papers so the back up crews don't have to be in the building all the time. The night crews frequently sleep at home although there are sleeping facilities at the ambulance building on Guelph Street.

The number of calls the crews answer is totally unpredictable.

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These transfers also account for some of the more irritating moments the women face.

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Nor does the hospital do any follow-up on warning the ambulance attendants when they have carried a highly contagious case. Although there are very strict rules

about decontaminating the vehicle and the attendants it is often strictly by chance that the attendants discover they have carried a contagious patient.

"They ought to tell us we're carrying a contagious person" Mrs. Koritko says. "At least then we could strip the ambulance and decontaminate it. This way not only are we endangering ourselves we can also pass on the germs to the next patient we carry."

Cleaning up the vehicle can be hard enough without having the problems Miss Thwaites once faced after a run with a contagious patient.

She arrived in Brampton to clean up the ambulance and the crew were told they had to burn their clothes since they had worn no protective garments. They stripped down and showered but they had no clean uniforms to put on.

"I got this frantic call," Mrs. Massena laughs. "Selina and two of the men were stuck in Brampton with no clothes. Could I send them something?"

First she had to get into the supply cupboard which was locked and then she had to guess at what size everyone took. Miss Thwaites chuckles that she and one of the men weren't too bad but the other fellow could have used his suit for a tent.

Delivering babies is another one of those small contingencies ambulance attendants are expected to be able to cope with.

"You see the doctors doing a nice neat job in the training films and it all looks so easy," Mr. Longbottom says. "What they don't tell you is how slippery the kid is and how you should make allowances for the motion of the vehicle. You have to be careful you don't drop it. Babies ought to come with safety grips so you can hang onto them. But Donna managed to deliver one not long ago."

**KIND OF NEAT**

"Yeah," Mrs. Massena grins. "It was kind of neat, actually. I was in the back with the mother and Floyd was driving. She grunted and there it was. I crawled up to the front and told Floyd we had another passenger. I didn't know what else to say."

Mrs. Massena and Mrs. Koritko would both like to become full-time attendants on a paid force but both find the discrimination still exists.

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"Selina isn't even engaged yet and Donna's kids are grown up," Mrs. Koritko points out, "so maybe they wouldn't get the same sort of discrimination I find. With a single woman they seem to figure they'll have her for at least a year until she gets engaged and married before she gets pregnant. And a woman with a grown up family probably won't have any more children. But they never ask how long I've been married or if I can have children or if I want a family. Nothing. They just seem to assume that as soon as I get hired I'll get pregnant and they'll lose me right away."

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and have recently completed the new requirement, the Emergency Medical Care Assistant course. Six more Georgetown people including Mr. Longbottom, hope to take the course this fall at night classes from Humber College.

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"That may sound hard," he says, "but after all what can you do for the patient if you don't have the first three?"

**PEOPLE AFRAID**

The attendants also stress the fact that call's will be billed to the person who uses the ambulance through OHIP rather than to the person who calls it.

"People are still afraid to leave their name and number when they call us," Mrs. Koritko says. "They call and ask for an ambulance to be sent to such and such an address. Then they hang up when we ask for their telephone number. It used to be that the bill sometimes went to the person who called and they're still nervous of that, I guess. But not any more. The user pays. Or at least the bill goes to his name through

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The women say any call can be tricky. Miss Thwaites has taken some self-defence courses and Mrs. Koritko says her husband has taught her a little bit. But they don't consider self-defence training to be much use. The main thing is using common sense and being careful.

"We got a call to the police station when they were still in the old municipal office on Main Street," Mrs. Massena says. "I walked in with one of the men and the police had this fellow under arrest for beating up his wife. The officer shoved me back and warned me to listen to what the guy was saying. He was muttering something about 'killing that little red-haired...'. His wife had red hair and mine was kind of red then too. I went back to the vehicle but when we got to the hospital I sat with him and he was as good as gold. No trouble at all. But the police don't take chances. They stay right with you if they think there'll be any trouble."

Sometimes, however, the ambulance arrives before the police. Then the women are wary.

Mrs. Koritko says she was called to a bar one night where a tough drunk was taking on everyone in sight. When she appeared and asked if anyone was in need of an ambulance the man gave her a strange look and straightened right up.

But then again, he could have turned ugly. They never know which it will be.

210. There were lots of men around and we sure could have used the help but they were all drunk. You couldn't begin to trust them to follow orders so everyone would lift together. It was better to struggle along and do it ourselves than risk putting someone's back out or drop the guy on the stretcher."

Donna Massena has been with the Georgetown Volunteer Ambulance Service for seven years as well as having a long-standing involvement with St. John's Ambulance. She is the service's training officer and conducts review sessions of the service's work on the fourth Sunday of every month. During her off-duty hours she's a Georgetown housewife.

Mrs. Koritko joined the ser-

vice about two years ago and also has an extensive background in first aid. She works as a secretary for Ducon-Mikropul in Brampton and came to the Georgetown group because it was the only volunteer service around her Brampton home.

Miss Thwaites has been with the service less than a year but has already finished her probationary period. She works part-time at Mirale Mart and Mavis-Rose, a Georgetown dress shop while she waits to get into the police force.

**OPEN SERVICE**

Although the service is open to anyone meeting the qualifications (an F class licence and a standard first aid certificate), new volunteers will serve a probationary period before they are ready to become full members.

They ride as a third member of the crew and learn by doing what they will face once they are full crew members. The probationary period lets them become familiar with the vehicle and the equipment as well as getting to know the area the service covers. It also gives them a chance to decide for themselves whether they really want to be involved in this kind of service.

"If they ride as third man in the crew and they run into a really messy situation they can go round to the back of the vehicle and get away for a few minutes," Mr. Longbottom says. "Once they're on full crew they can't do that. They're too busy. It all depends on who they're broken in with. They can be broken in gently or they can have it

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## Doubleheader at swine club

By Christine Schulz

Two heads are always better than one? Not always. One for 1 little piggy born on Lazy Pat Farm, 2 heads were to disadvantage. The piglet owned by Lance Pocock, had 2 heads, unfortunately joined at the jaws making it evident that its life would be a very short one.

On Tuesday, August 17, 1979 the last meeting of the Halton 4-H Swine Club was held for his year.

To start the meeting off with a little fun, Lance Pocock, our host and club leader, asked each of the members to guess the combined weight of two pigs. The prize, a glass piggy bank, was won by Gerhard Trevirams, who came within 3 pounds of the actual weight.

Next came the Halton 4-H Swine Club Quiz. This quiz was used to test the members on how much they had learned in the Swine Club. Everyone enjoyed writing this quiz immensely.

The members learned a lot about diseases at this meeting through our guest speaker, Paul Simmons, Swine Specialist with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food in Markdale.

Some of the diseases mentioned were Rheinitis, Virus

pneumonia and Parasites.

After the technical part of the meeting came the fun part. Mr Pocock invited us to pop, cake, a dip in the pool and a game of shuffleboard. All the members enjoyed themselves greatly.

The meeting was adjourned at 11 p.m. and we thanked Mr. Pocock for being our host of the last Swine Club meeting for 1979.

Let us put your wedding in bloom.

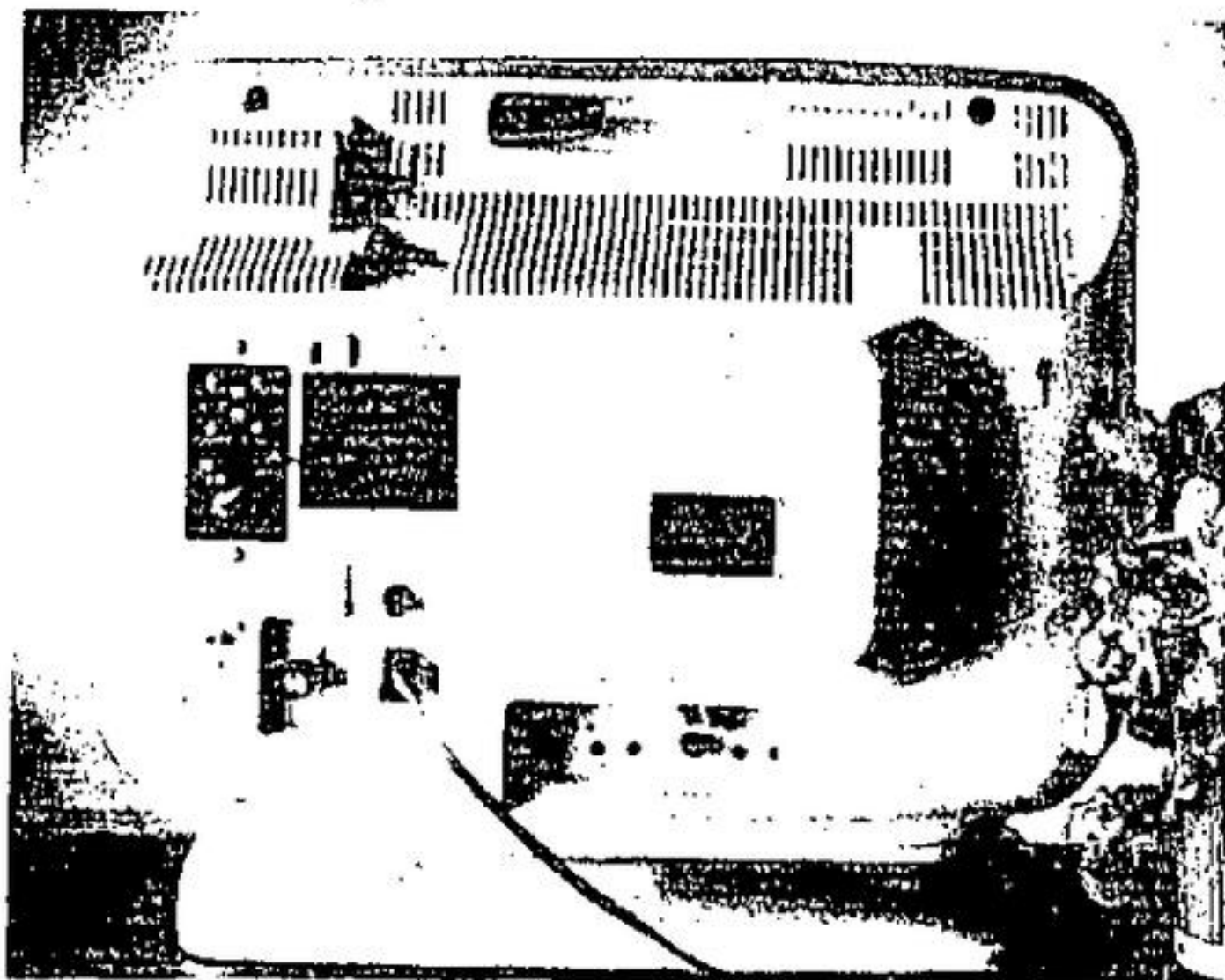
The day is approaching. And the arrangements are being made. Call us for bouquets, corsages, boutonnières, flowers for church or table center-pieces. We have everything to make your day a beautiful occasion.

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