

Let's Take a Look

By

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(Special to The Highland Park Press)

Drama at Their Fingertips!

"Flashing lights! Drama at your finger tips! The fascination of a telephone switchboard. The interesting task of setting up calls for far flung points. The glow of satisfaction achieved by putting through emergency calls. You can be cast today! Set the scene! Cue the actors! Enjoy this interesting work!"

That's how advertisements of the local telephone company read in this newspaper. And, to me, the ads are so compelling that I felt I must visit Highland Park's "nerve center" this week. And a nerve center it is, too!

Young, Courteous, Quite Efficient . . .

We trotted up to 21 S. St. Johns — where the traffic department of the telephone company is — climbed some stairs, and entered a long, brightly-painted room bursting with activity.

That room, we learn, is headquarters for Highland Park's staff of young, courteous, and quite efficient telephone operators.

I've never seen a harder-working group of females, the majority of which are teen-agers. And when I arrived it was a "quiet time," I was told by the chief operator whom I had expected to be an elderly woman.

Instead I met young, attractive Mrs. Ann McCarthy, this town's capable chief operator, who has served Highland Parkers for six and one half years.

IMPROVING SERVICE . . .

"We're constantly trying to improve our service for Highland Parkers," Mrs. McCarthy said, adding, "They're such fine people that we want to do as much as we can for them."

"But we have such a tremendous turnover of personnel," she explained. "We have so many girls who get married, or move away, or go to college, that it's impossible to keep a crew of efficient, highly-trained operators on at all times. Although we've hired over 140 girls since the first of the year, only 33 have stayed on permanently," she said.

NOT EASY WORK . . .

A telephone operator's work is not easy. She must go to a telephone school for a month, then train for two more months before she's able to handle calls with a moderate amount of swiftness and efficiency.

Highland Park's switchboard is flashing constantly. Each of the 36 local operators handles between 150 and 200 calls an hour. Toll operators (those patient, sweet-talking women), although handling fewer calls, are always alert, always busy. On a "peak load" day, Highland Parkers place 42,000 calls.

And that's a lot of "Number, please" and "Thank you."

FAIR, PATIENT, SYMPATHETIC . . .

"Highland Parkers are fair, patient, and sympathetic," Mrs. McCarthy told me. And I think she should know for she has been working for the telephone company since 1929 in various towns.

"And I love my work," she added with the deepest sincerity.

Here are some of the questions I asked Mrs. McCarthy:

How many telephones are there in Highland Park?

"8,076," she answered. (That's about one telephone for every two persons in town, I figure.)

How many long distance calls do you complete each day?

"Over 2600 — and many, many more when a troop train arrives at Fort Sheridan. Yesterday, for example, we had 3,100 soldier calls. We handle all Fort Sheridan calls from pay phones," she explained.

How many girls do you have working for and with you?

"We have 217 right now. The largest group is made up of high school girls, many of whom are working part time."

WOMEN USE PHONE MOST . . .

Do men or do women use Highland Park telephones most?

"Women. During the day they're phoning orders to meat markets and grocery stores. In the evening calls are mostly social."

What are your busiest hours?

"From 9 to 10 a.m. weekdays. And from 10 to 11 a.m. on Saturdays."

How many supervisors do you have?

"We have 17. Also, there are six junior supervisors, five assistant chief operators, and a staff of seven clerks who take care of personnel work."

What are the other departments of this company?

"Commercial, headed by Mr. Edward Knox. And the plant department supervised by Mr. L. Stewart."

WHAT IS A GOOD OPERATOR? . . .

Describe a good operator.

"She has average intelligence. She has a lot of personality. She's polite, mentally alert, and speedy. We have a wonderful group of girls in Highland Park. They're friendly and always willing to help each other. They all work six days a week, eight hours a day."

Can any operator ring any number in Highland Park?

"Yes. When an operator rings your number, she has been trained to ring it for a full two seconds every 10 seconds. Sometimes, because of the great number of calls we handle, this is impossible."

After watching the busy operators for a few minutes, I was weary. Mrs. McCarthy seemed to realize this so she led me to the pleasant recreation room where we talked while sipping some coffee.

The operators have pleasant quarters to relax in — whenever they can be spared. I learned that a new addition is going to be built onto the present building. This addition will house a cafeteria for employes, as well as a new and larger rest room for the hard-working operators.

I was impressed — as you've probably gathered — with our telephone company and its personnel.

Mrs. McCarthy, Mr. Knox, and Mr. Stewart deserve a great deal of credit for maintaining an organization that is functioning

quite smoothly considering the difficult times we're passing through.

GOOD LUCK . . .

Good luck to coach Dave Floyd and his football team when they meet Proviso — a rather rugged 11 as I remember — at Highland Park Saturday, Veterans' Homecoming Day.

HOW TRUE . . .

Overheard on Central Ave. this week. An elderly woman was talking to a young veteran.

Woman: "How old are you, Bob?"

Ex-Gi: "Twenty-one, Mam, plus four years in the Army. We don't count those years, although they were tough ones."

PARTING THOUGHT . . .

There is good in everyone. Why not look for that good?

Lions Are Entertained By Film of Telephone Company Broadcast

This (Thursday) noon at the luncheon meeting of the Lions club, at Highland House, a very interesting and entertaining film is being presented.

Members of the Lions club appreciate the efforts of our local telephone company manager, Edward Knox, through whom this film of the broadcasting of the Telephone Hour was secured. The program carries, as an added attraction, the guest soloist, Joseph Hoffman.

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This Month in Your Service BULLETIN



LOCK NO. 6 ON THE ILLINOIS AND MICHIGAN CANAL at CHANNAHON

Let's go exploring into the Past by way of historical spots in Northern Illinois. OUR LANDMARKS in the current Service Bulletin will be a guide if you feel like seeking out some of these spots at a later date. However, you may travel to sixteen of them without even leaving your armchair. You may visit friendly old mills, lovely churches, and pause by the Illinois and Michigan Canal with its century-old locks and Aqueduct. You may make discoveries. We have a lighthouse light that "went under the earth" instead of "under the sea." The construction of one dwelling place was influenced by the curious combination of a cyclone and a barrel of flour. An inn of the romantic stage coach era was also the birthplace of a world-famous dancer. A tavern maintained two flourishing establishments—the tavern in front and a grocery in the rear. All sixteen landmarks are illustrated by John McKee.

The "About You and Your House" page stresses the lunch-box theme. The recipe page contains two sugar-savers—Quick Coffee Cake and Cottage Pudding.



GROSSE POINTE LIGHTHOUSE on Lake Michigan. Its Fresnel Lantern came first to Florida from France in 1860. Later it was sent to Grosse Pointe after this lighthouse was erected in 1873.

As Entertaining As Your Favorite Magazine

THE Service BULLETIN

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