



HURRY, PLEASE!

"Oh, please hurry! Something terrible has happened!" Miss Ruth Utendorfer, above, police telephone operator, does not lose her head when she receives such a call, but she admits it gives her a startled moment.



Left to right, Miss Ruth Utendorfer and Miss Augusta Brehme. Miss Brehme has been answering calls on the police switchboard for 22 years.

Miss Edna Murray alternates between working at the switchboard and operating the teletype at Station X. Above, she is at the teletype, and Harry F. Wernke, police telephone room manager, is giving her a message.

Police Switchboard Operators Keep Tuned to Heartbeat of City

"Do you know where my husband is?" That is the Sunday morning theme-song at the telephone switchboard at Station X, according to the girls who work there.

"Of course, it happens on other mornings, too," said Miss Ruth Utendorfer, who has been a police telephone operator for four years, "but it happens more often after a large Saturday night."

Those calls, like all emergency calls, are referred to Station X.

Hear City's Heart Beat

"We used to handle a good many of the emergencies ourselves, said Miss Augusta Brehme, who has been an operator at the police station for 22 years.

"We used to call an ambulance, send the wagon, or try to do whatever else might be necessary, but now all such things are handled by Station X."

These girls who work in the heart of the city's life pick up daily the threads of human bewilderment, fear, jealousy, intrigue and crime and help to straighten them out so that they may be woven into a pattern of law and order.

Affected by Weather

"If we allowed every tragedy to upset us, we wouldn't be much good at the switchboard," Miss Brehme explained as she answered a signal, said, "Police." She listened and then said, "Just a moment," stuck another plug in about a half-yard away from the first, and continued:

Callers Sometimes Doubt Their Ears

their cellars are flooded," she laughed, "and when their dogs get lost. And of course they call, as everyone should, when a child is lost or a husband or wife fails to reappear after a reasonable time."

Miss Brehme answered another call. "No," she said into the transmitter, "this isn't Spring Grove Cemetery. This is Police."

Many times, she said, callers question the truth of that statement.

"One man asked me, 'Are you sure this is the police station?' I told him of course I was sure, and he replied, 'Well, it don't sound like any policeman to me.' So many people forget that women operate police switchboards as well as other switchboards."

Voice Wins Compliments

Miss Brehme has received numerous compliments on her pleasant telephone voice. Few people know she studied singing for years.

While three of the girls operate the switchboard, a fourth operates the teletype, which sends and receives information on police happenings, traffic court, drivers' license suspensions, auto thefts, etc. All of the work in the telephone room is under the direction of Harry F. Wernke, police manager.

Mr. Wernke has been with the Cincinnati and Suburban Bell Telephone Co. for 27 years, and 21 years of that time have been spent in police work.

"We had a pretty exciting time during the 1937 flood. For a while, before things were organized, everyone was calling in here trying to arrange for boats.

"You, might not think the weather would have so much to do with our work, but it does," Miss Brehme said. "We were quite busy recently when heavy rains brought a flood of calls.

"People call the police when