

# Police Radio Experiment Begins Thursday

By GEORGE HAHN  
Enquirer Reporter

Starting Thursday, some of the persons phoning the Cincinnati Police Communications Section to report an emergency will be answered by the soft feminine voice of Deborah Neudigate.

Six months from now, the same feminine voice will begin broadcasting runs over Station X to Cincinnati Police.

Miss Neudigate and two male fellow civilians who will start work with her—Dick Young and Arthur Elkins—are part of a \$34,268 experiment which may culminate a year from now — when results are evaluated — in the replacement of 47 policemen and 23 police cadets at Station X with civilians.

The idea behind the experiment is not only to free more police for street duty but to more effectively match Station X dispatches and complaint operators with the job, said Lt. Col. William R. Bracke, Technical Services Bureau commander.

"For years we really haven't assigned people to the Communications Section with the feeling of matching the employee to the job," Colonel Bracke explained.

"We haven't because until recently there was no yardstick or measuring device to use in evaluating a person's skills in communications.

"Then recently we learned of tests devised by Drs. Thomas R. Tortoriello and Stephen J. Blatt, both assistant professors in the Department of Communications Arts at the University of Dayton.

"They were the first people ever to research this area of police communications."

Dr. Blatt told The Enquirer that he and his colleague devised their tests over a 2½-year period to mea-

sure the communications relaying ability of the persons using those radio systems.

"WHAT WE WANTED to measure," Blatt said, "were such factors as: the person's ability to listen and comprehend language and its meaning; their empathy with the caller; can they keep their 'cool' under stress and such factors as racial, sexual and ethnic biases."

After applying for and receiving the \$34,268 from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) to pay the \$11,423 annual salaries of the three applicants

chosen, the police department administered nine hours of tests to 25 applicants for the posts.

Miss Neudigate, 20, 3601 Puhlman Ave., Cheviot, topped the list. Elkins, 23, 1931 Neyer Ave., Cumminsville, finished third. Young, 23, 5655 Monfort Hills Ave., Mt. Airy, came in fourth. (The man who finished second turned down the job).

"We wanted to hire the top finishers on the tests," said Lt. Paul Krumme, Communications Section commander. "The fact that Miss Neudigate is a woman, Elkins is black and Young is white had

nothing to do with it but I'm tickled to death it worked out that way.

"Following three days of training, which ends Wednesday, each of the three will be assigned to a different eight-hour shift and will rotate weekly.

"For their first six months, they will be primarily complaint operators, taking emergency phone calls from the public and relaying them to our dispatchers (broadcasters). For the last six months, they will broadcast runs to police."

Biggest obstacle to overcome, aside from the stress and pressure of the job, will be learning to calm down an excited caller or policeman in order to find out what's wrong so it can be dealt with, Krumme believes.

Young, Elkins and Miss Neudigate, the first police communications specialists to be scientifically selected, bring varied backgrounds to their new jobs.

Young was recently discharged from the Navy after spending two years as radio operator aboard the submarine Benjamin Franklin. He likes the idea of providing service to the community and hopes to use his new job as a stepping-stone to a future police career.

Elkins, a former reservations salesman with American Airlines, is used to dealing with the public and is fascinated with the chance to learn different facets of police work.

MISS NEUDIGATE, who will become the first female ever to answer phones and broadcast full time at Station X, is used to dealing with both police and the public as a former clerk in the police Record Section.

Asked if police on the street might resent taking radioed orders from a woman, Miss Neudigate replied: "They may think it's slightly humorous but I don't think I'll meet any resistance."

A veteran policeman, questioned outside one of the district stations, agreed.

"Taking orders from a woman won't faze me," he said. "I've been doing it for 20 years—from my wife!"



—Enquirer (Mark Gerry Walter) Photo

## Something New Is Added

... Miss Neudigate takes the helm Thursday