

Telephone Operator

SM: Esther Savia Moore was the business office, she took care of that. Hazel Matthews was the chief operator. She lived upstairs

AS: What year was that, about?

SM: 1952. It had been there long before that.

AS: When we were doing our project on Vienna Woods, my friend Patric came up with a 1954 article in the Post saying 'Vienna gets Dial Phones.' Does that ring true?

SM: I don't know. I only worked that one year and then I got pregnant and had to quit. So I don't know what they did after that. I don't remember when we got dial phones.

AS: So when you were operator, people were calling you to say 'please ring...' How does that work?

SM: Well, a light would come on the board and you'd plug into it. And you'd say 'number please' and they'd say...and half the time it would be 'Shirley, would you call so-and-so?' It was so laid back and everybody knew who you were. I had my neighbor call me one night and say 'Shirley, would you tell Wes to come up here? There's somebody in my backyard.'

AS: She just had to pick up the phone and call the operator!

SM: Yeah! Well, I'd come in, I'd plug in on it, and I'd have that head-set on.

AS: Everybody knew that you were on the board that night? How'd they know? Well, then again, it's so small. 'Hey, I'm working tonight.'

SM: (laughs) I don't know how they knew. Maybe they recognized your voice when you answered.

AS: And so they would say...but if they didn't know you would they ask for a number or for a name?

SM: No, they'd ask for a number.

AS: So you'd have to know people's numbers. What was an example of a number? Was it a three or four digit?

SM: Well, our number was 675. Now the first telephone office I remember was on the corner, catty-corner from that dog spa is. That was were the first telephone office was that I knew of. That was the Gorham House. G-O-R-H-A-M.