

# LONG ISLAND WEEKLY

## The New York Times

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### Making Friends, And Foes, By Phone

By DIANE KETCHAM

**J**OHN KOCH and Thadine Connorton of Elmont are getting married because of it, and Diane Walsh of Mastic says, "It's meant a whole new life to me. Psychologically, it's the No. 1 thing in my life."

But Madeline Sheehy of Middle Island feels that "it's disgraceful — an invasion of privacy," and Arlene Edelstein of Coram charges that it is "an out-and-out rape of the public."

Several months ago, the Nynex Corporation decided via its subsidiary New York Telephone to use Long Island as a testing ground for a new phone service — Phone-A-Friend — and the big question was what public reaction would be. Although the same type of service has been initiated in other countries, this was the first time a 24-hour party-line type of service was to be offered in the United States.

Now, four months after the service started in 14 communities, or 35 phone exchanges, in Nassau and Suffolk Counties and two exchanges in Staten Island, Long Islanders are starting to speak out about Phone-A-Friend, and a dispute has arisen over its cost. With one month left before the Public Service Commission's temporary approval of the service expires, Phone-A-Friend is beginning to create quite a controversy on Long Island.

Phone-A-Friend operates like a lottery, according to Bruce Reissman, a spokesman for New York Telephone. Customers can call one of three numbers at any time of day or night and join in or listen to conversation with four other people. Each number has been set aside for a different age group — young adults, adults and the aged — but teen-agers have been known to call the adult line, and adults over 30 seem to prefer using the older people's line.

"When you dial in to Phone-A-Friend," a flier from New York Telephone says, "nobody knows who you are or where you are, unless you want them to. You can join in the conversation or, if you prefer, sit back quietly and enjoy listening."

The flier also provides suggested topics of conversation: pop rock and movies for teen-agers; inflation and sports for adults, and retirement and grandchildren for older people.

If you don't like the conversation when you call, you can hang up and call again and the "lottery" will connect you with another fivesome. That obviously happens quite often, according to Mrs. Sheehy, who said that her 13-year-old daughter made almost 1,900 calls to Phone-A-Friend in one month for a cost of \$547.

Supporters of the service include Mrs. Walsh, who contends that it actually saved a life when a few Phone-A-Friend users got together and went to visit another user, whom they found unconscious on the floor, and Mrs. Connorton and Mr. Koch, who are getting married on Nov. 17, after having met one evening on Phone-A-Friend.

There has been a first annual Phone-A-Friend picnic attended by about 75 people, and another one is planned Aug. 26, according to Mrs. Walsh. Mr. Reissman cites a recent survey of 800 Phone-A-Friend customers, which found that 50 percent

of the users were very likely or somewhat likely to use the service again.

But others point to what they feel are incredibly high phone bills, in most instances caused by the use of Phone-A-Friend by teen-agers and pre-teen-agers in the family — usage that parents say they neither condoned nor even knew about.

Barbara Fitzgerald of Staten Island said that her 16-year-old son ran up a \$1,340 phone bill — \$872 in

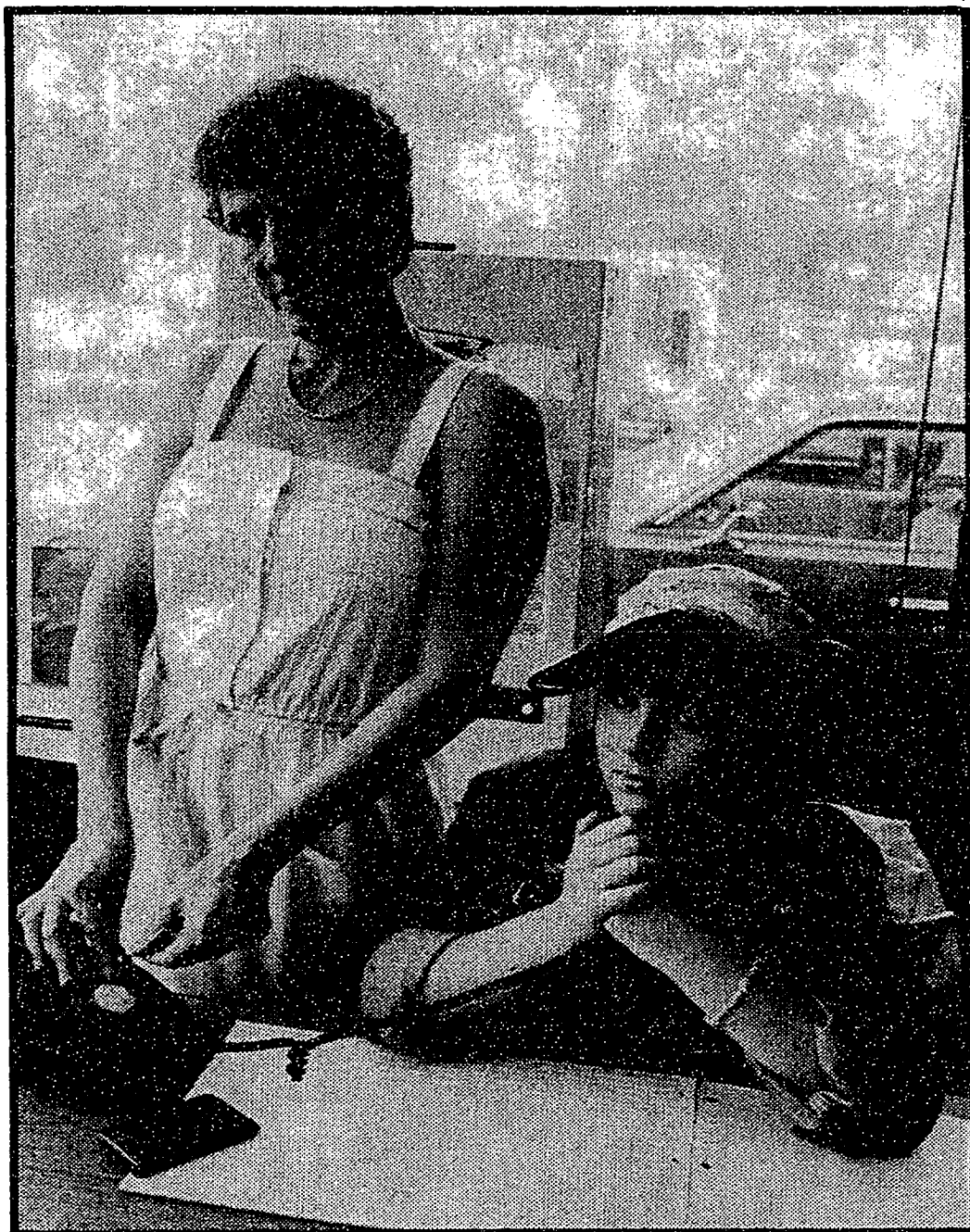
May and \$468 in June before she "cut him off." Besides the direct calls to Phone-A-Friend, Mrs. Fitzgerald said, her son made toll calls to individuals he met on Phone-A-Friend, mostly in Suffolk County.

Mrs. Fitzgerald is a single working mother earning \$19,000 a year as a secretary, and she was shocked when she saw the results of her son's calls to Phone-A-Friend. "My first phone bill was 18 pages long," she said. "I thought, What are all

these 516 calls? Maybe it's a hot line. I thought maybe he had a problem. If he did, a psychiatrist would have been cheaper."

Mrs. Fitzgerald found out about Phone-A-Friend and became incensed. She has written to the Public Service Commission, the State Attorney General's office and the head of New York Telephone. She thought her problem was unique

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Madeline Sheehy with her daughter Adena at the service station where Adena will be working to pay telephone bill



The New York Times / Rameshwar Das; Richard Sandler

John Koch and Thadine Connorton fell in love on the telephone

### Parallels Sifted By House Unit in Shoreham Case

By MATTHEW L. WALD

WASHINGTON

**T**HE setting was an ornate hearing room on Capitol Hill, the witnesses and their questioners came from almost everywhere but Long Island, and the title of the hearing referred to a reactor called Grand Gulf, in Port Gibson, Miss. But somehow the topic kept coming back to Shoreham.

Grand Gulf, like the Long Island Lighting Company's Shoreham nuclear facility, is a General Electric boiling-water reactor, and, like Shoreham, it is its utility's first nuclear plant. Also like Shoreham, it employs emergency diesel generators built by Trans-America Delaval.

That disturbed the Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff, which ordered Grand Gulf's builder, Mississippi Power and Light, to take one of the diesels apart for a close inspection. But that was where the similarity to Shoreham ended; while diesel generator delays have held up Shoreham for most of a year, they did not slow down Grand Gulf.

Grand Gulf has completed its low-power testing, but ran into a number of problems in that process, leading to the hearing here, held by the Energy and Environment Subcommittee of the House Interior Committee late last month. From their questions, some members of the subcommittee made it obvious that they felt that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission had moved too quickly to license the troubled plant, while others expressed the opposite view.

But the commission action that evoked some of the strongest re-

sponse was a decision to require Grand Gulf to disassemble one of the diesel generators, without requiring that the plant shut down for the period that the diesel generator was out of service. The issue is of importance only to Shoreham and Grand Gulf, because while there are other plants under construction that employ Trans-America Delaval diesels, only those two are far enough along so that the diesels could delay completion.

The contrast between the handling of Grand Gulf and Shoreham was picked up by Representative John F. Seiberling, Democrat of Ohio.

"How does this differ from Lilco?" he asked the five members of the commission, who appeared as a panel to testify before the subcommittee.

From Lilco's point of view, there was no substantial difference. In an interview last month, William J. Catacosinos, the Lilco board chairman, said that if not for local opposition to the plant, the commission would probably have granted Lilco a waiver, to begin low-power testing without the diesels in place.

However, according to the chairman of the commission, Nunzio J. Palladino, the regulatory body is not swayed by any opposition other than well-grounded engineering judgments. In the Grand Gulf case, for example, he denied that the decision to allow work on the diesels to proceed simultaneously with low-power testing (as distinct from the order in the Shoreham case, which has required that the work be done sequentially) was related to the fact that interest costs at the \$3.4 billion Mississippi reactor are raising costs there by about \$1 million a day, a figure ap-

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### Union in Turmoil Over Fund Dispute

By JOHN RATHER

**T**HE largest labor union for public employees in the state is facing a defection by members employed by Suffolk County in a dispute over control of

Nearly half of the 7,000 county employees who belong to Local 852, the Suffolk chapter of the statewide Civil Service Employees Association (C.S.E.A.), have signed petition cards expressing an interest in leaving the parent union, which has its headquarters in Albany.

The drive is led by Charles Novo Jr., a heavy-equipment operator for the Town of Brookhaven and a former president of the local, who was suspended from office by state union officials in November 1983 in a struggle over administration of a \$3.8 million employee benefit fund.

William L. McGowan, the statewide C.S.E.A. president, charged Mr. Novo with misconduct for opposing, after first appearing to support, a plan to shift administration of the fund from an eight-member board of trustees in the county to the state headquarters. But Mr. Novo has contended that Local 852 members overwhelmingly opposed the shift, and that he acted on their behalf.

He is now the coordinator of a newly formed ad hoc organization, the Suffolk County Association of Municipal Employees, which seeks to represent the county workers. Shirley Germain, the organization's president, succeeded Mr. Novo as acting president of Local 852, but was suspended from the union in May 1984 when the state union officials accused her of not opposing the dissident group.

Ironically, the turmoil within the union comes less than a year and a half after Local 852 signed the richest contract in its history with the county.

The State Public Employees Relations Board has set a hearing on the ouster bid for Wednesday at the state office building in Hauppauge. A vote on whether to decertify the C.S.E.A. as the bargaining agent for the county employees and replace it with Mr. Novo's organization could come as early as this fall.

The state C.S.E.A., which represents about 220,000 workers in 120 political subdivisions, including Nassau County and towns and villages in both Long Island counties, is moving vigorously to oppose Mr. Novo.

The Albany leadership has warned the Suffolk local members that their bargaining power will decrease without the backing of a statewide union.

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#### 2 Plays and Many Folk Songs

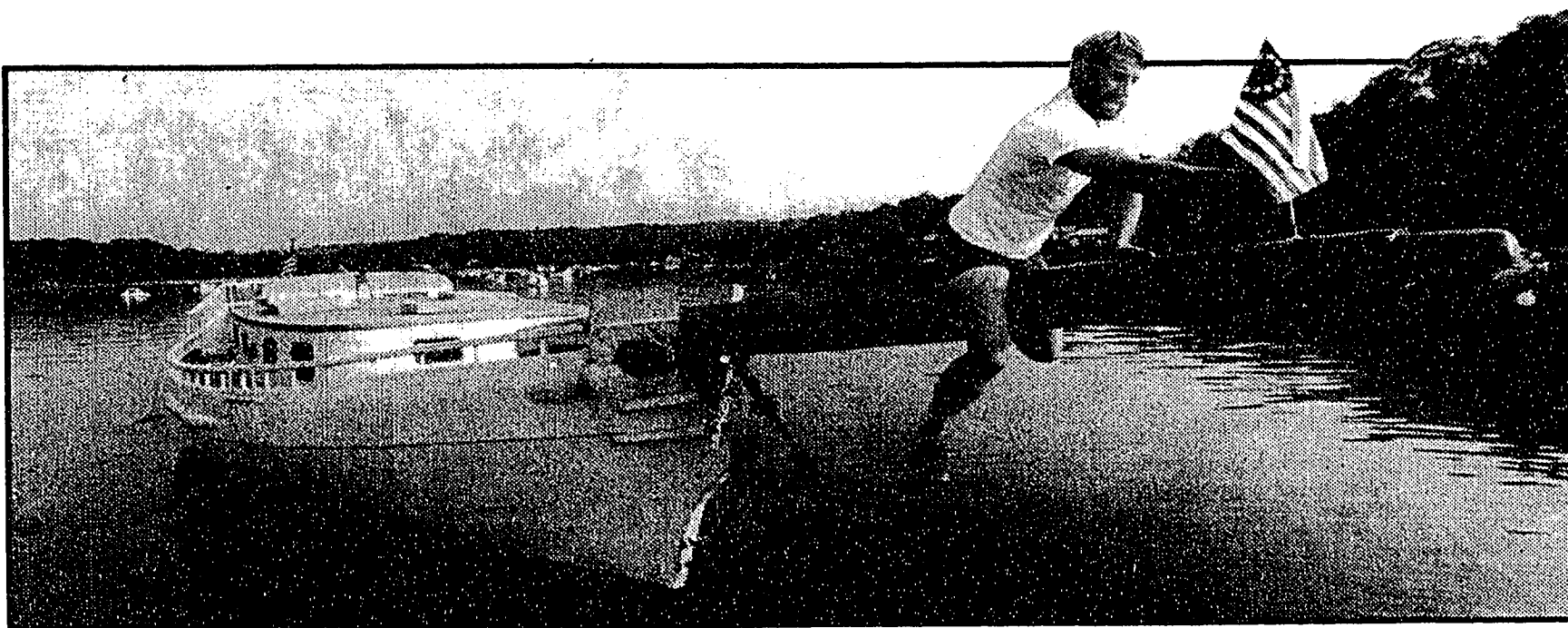
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The New York Times / Tony Jerome

SAVING 100-YEAR-OLD BOAT: William T. Perks working on prow of Little Jennie. Page 5.



# Saving Jennie, a Boat With a Rich Past

By TOM LEDERER

**I**T was mid-afternoon at Knutson's Shipyard in Huntington on one of the hottest days of the summer. Fourteen volunteers, covered with sweat, tar and paint, worked feverishly to patch the keel of the Little Jennie, a 100-year-old, 86-foot sailboat.

Fighting the clock and the ebbing tides, their mission was to breathe enough life into the deteriorating dry-dock vessel so that it might be launched, towed to a new location and spared a one-way voyage to the Huntington Town dump.

Some eight hours later, the Little Jennie reached her destination in Centerport Harbor, thus becoming one of the oldest ships afloat in the United States. She was also embarking on a new career that would include her participation in the 1986 Statue of Liberty centennial celebration and have her serve as a memorial to the man who headed a Long Island spy ring that provided George Washington with vital information on British troop movements during the Revolutionary War.

For those involved in the project to completely restore the Little Jennie, giving up their vacation time, risking injury and straining domestic relations to make the boat seaworthy, it was a labor of love. But despite their

as finding someone who had the technical skills and the motivation to save the boat.

"Tommy told me, 'Bill, I know you won't let the boat die,'" Mr. Perks said.

Mr. Perks, who attended the United States Merchant Marine Academy and previously had worked on the restoration of two large schooners, decided to take on the challenge.

"I discussed it with my wife, put together a crew and talked to a couple of naval architects about how much work would be involved," he said.

"I've also talked to Lincoln Payne of the Liberty Committee and got assurances that Little Jennie can officially participate in the Statue of Liberty's birthday celebration."

For William Townsend Perks, there were other considerations. For many years, he and his uncle, the publisher Paul Townsend, had felt a need to find a fitting memorial for their ancestor Robert Townsend, who headed the Long Island spy network for George Washington during the Revolutionary War. They found it in the Little Jennie.

Mr. Perks has decided to follow the strict guidelines of Federal nautical procedures for dedicating a ship for a specific purpose, in this case to the memory of Robert Townsend and the Long Island spy ring.

According to historians, Robert Townsend, using the name Samuel Culper Jr., worked in concert with a female operative, known to this day only by the number 355, to relay news of British troop movements to General Washington via Setauket and Norwalk whaleboat couriers. Robert Townsend and his mistress, whom he

could not marry for fear of exposing their collusion, are credited with foiling the treachery of Benedict Arnold and Maj. John André.

General Arnold later took his revenge by having 355 placed in a prison ship, where she died shortly after giving birth to Robert Townsend's son. The child survived and became a legislator in New York.

Robert Townsend, a Quaker who found war and espionage despicable necessities, spent his postwar life secluded, unheralded and shrouded in melancholy at his Raynham Hall residence in Oyster Bay.

"Townsend was a secretive, troubled man who probably was never sure whether his record was one of honor or shame," said Lynn Groh in

her book, "The Culper Spy Ring."

Historians searched for 150 years, but it was not until 1930 that Morton Pennypacker discovered that Robert Townsend and Samuel Culper Jr. were one and the same.

"There are no historical markers or memorials for the Long Island spy ring, which was important enough for George Washington to visit the island as a show of appreciation," said Rufus B. Langhans, the Huntington Town historian, who supplied Mr. Perks with a replica of a Colonial American flag for the Little Jennie's bowsprit.

"With the tie-in to the Statue of Liberty, taken in its proper context," Mr. Langhans said, "the boat will be a fitting memorial."



The New York Times

William T. Perks  
aboard the ketch

enthusiasm and determination, not one of them has been deceived into thinking they have an easy or glamorous task ahead of them.

"It's going to take a lot of hard work to restore the Little Jennie," said Thomas Knutson, president of the Knutson Shipbuilding Corporation, who took possession of the vessel after its owner abandoned a mid-1970's attempt to restore her. Despite a sentimental appreciation for the boat, Mr. Knutson felt it impractical for his own company to take over the project, and sold it last month for a nominal price to William Townsend Perks of Centerport.

"My major concern was that it be saved from the boneyard," Mr. Knutson said. "It would be a shame if the restoration were not completed and it winds up junked."

The Little Jennie is a bugeye ketch, built in 1884 by J. T. Marsh of the Calvert Company in the Chesapeake Bay area of Maryland. Descendants of the Indian dugout log canoe, the flat-bottom bugeyes were originally used as oyster draggers. By the turn of the century, the Chesapeake Bay bugeyes were converted to other uses.

In her long life, Little Jennie is said to have served in such varied roles as a luxury vessel, as a charter boat and, during Prohibition, as a rumrunner. During that last career, she was equipped with two Liberty engines, which allowed her to outrun Coast Guard cutters.

"This is a very significant boat with a fascinating history," said David Bohaska, research director for the Calvert Marine Museum in Maryland. "There probably aren't more than seven or eight bugeyes still afloat in the entire United States."

In the 1960's, Little Jennie served as a pleasure yacht available for fishing, diving and partying expeditions. She has spent the last quarter-century in the Huntington area, and a restoration was to have readied her for the 1976 Operation Sail, the assemblage of sailing vessels in New York Harbor in connection with America's Bicentennial.

On that occasion, the restoration was abandoned after cost overruns and structural miscalculations, and Little Jennie's owner lost interest in her. The boat then remained in storage at Knutson's for nearly seven years.

William Townsend Perks, a senior bay constable and former harbor master for the Town of Huntington, had first seen the ship in Huntington Bay when he was 6 years old.

"It was the biggest boat in Huntington, and one of the most awesome sights I can remember as a child," Mr. Perks said. "I never lost track of her whereabouts, and dreamed that some day I would own her."

His serious attempts to acquire the ship began when he recently heard reports that Little Jennie was bound for the town dump. For Mr. Knutson, the money involved was not as important

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