

Party lines still ringing

by JAN EVANS
Battalion Reporter

"I think there's somebody on the line."
That's what Lucy Myers of Red Rock, Texas, says to get rid of eavesdroppers on her telephone. Myers is one of thousands of Texas residents who have a party line, where they share their phone line with one or more households.

Despite modern technology, the party line is alive and well. About 3,000 Bryan and College Station phone lines are shared by up to eight customers.

The advantages or disadvantages of party lines depend a great deal on who else is using the same line. Myers contends she is one of the less fortunate ones. There are eight households on her party line, two of which are home-businesses and two are families with teen-agers.

"It has gotten to be a joke with our friends," Myers said. "Almost nobody can ever reach us."

She and her husband keep the party line because the cost is about one tenth of a private line, and she said the zoning in her area causes them to make many long distance calls.

"Our best friends live five miles away and it's long distance."

She said her main problem with the phone is that she and her husband sometime miss calls from people who do not know about the party line and give up trying to call.

But the Myers have adjusted to their party line, which they have had for over a year. "You get used to picking up the phone first to see if somebody else is using it."

And since their own phone rings when three other families receive phone calls, Myers said she has been awakened in the early morning several times.

The Bryan and College Station phone services do not have many of these problems, however. The party line phones ring only for the household or business being called. And no more than four households are being put on one line.

Bill Johnigan, Service Officer Manager for GTE, said the office does not receive many complaints on party lines in this area. He said the main problems he hears about are customers abusing their privileges, such as leaving the phone off the hook so they can sleep.

There is also the problem of some families talking on the telephone more than their share, "especially if they have teen-age kids."

Johnigan said the company will change a customer's party line, when possible, if there are "real problems."

He said quite a few persons change their phone service, almost always to upgrade it, by reducing the number of people on the line or getting a private phone.

A residential four-party line costs \$5.02 per month, whereas a residential private phone costs \$7.57 per month.

A private phone in a rural area costs the same, plus \$1 extra for each quarter mile away from the city limits.

Johnigan said it costs \$7.50 for the initial service charge to change phone service, and the remainder of the fee could go as high as \$37.50, depending on how much work it takes to change the phone line.

Lately, customers from rural areas have been requesting private lines the most. Johnigan attributed this to people staying home more because of the energy crisis. Some rural areas, however, have only four-party line systems.

Johnigan said the phone service has filed for a rate increase which will probably go into effect in August or September.

Exhibits offer both local & famous collections

MSC gallery keeps art alive at A&M

by CHARLIE MUSTACHIA

Battalion Reporter

Art is alive, well and living on the Texas A&M University campus.

Although several universities in the southwest conference have art galleries, A&M's Memorial Student Center gallery is unique, said Karen Penny, student acting chairman of the arts committee.

Each spring a student, faculty and staff selection committee contracts an assorted collection of exhibits which they feel will be most interesting to students, Penny said.

Many of the exhibits are free except for shipping and insurance charges, Penny said.

When an internationally famous collection is not being shown in the gallery, the arts committee works in conjunction with other committees on campus, Penny said.

Last week, the gallery featured a collection of technology-related pictures, sponsored by SCONA.

Presently, the artwork of the winners and participants of the MSC juried arts competition are being exhibited in the gallery.

Penny said art is more present at Texas A&M than people realize.

"In the architecture department students paint and draw and do beautiful work," she said.

There is not a college of art at the University, but there is an interest in art, Penny said. "I think art is for everyone, it's a personal taste, it's whatever you enjoy."

She said art exhibits are assets to universities because they teach students about other people and their personalities.



"A university is supposed to expose you to as many things as possible," she said.

Because there is a shortage of office space in the MSC, Penny said, the gallery is trying to attract more students.

"This year's been very important because in order to keep the gallery, we have to show that students do use it," Penny said. "There are presently many people who would like to go ahead and turn it into offices."

Surveys conducted by the art committee showed that approximately 400 persons visit the gallery on an average weekend.

The hospitality committee handles public receptions for the artists who tour with their exhibits, Penny said.

Last semester, a reception was held for Jesse Trevino, an artist from San Antonio, who lost his right hand in Viet Nam.

"The students loved meeting him and were greatly impressed," Penny said.

During January, the work of five Houston painters was exhibited in the gallery. These paintings were shipped from the Max Hutchison Gallery in Houston.

One of the most popular exhibits shown each year is the winning entries from the MSC Camera Committee's spring photograph contest, Penny said.

This exhibit, called Salon 80, begins Sunday.

Penny said the committee also hopes to have John Carter, a watercolorist, give a seminar this semester.