

THE EGG TIMER

The telephone tethered us to each other. During the early 1980's calling Oak Ridge from Knoxville and vice versa was long distance; however, the local telephone company had a plan whereby one could sign up and for an additional \$4.00 monthly the caller could talk up to 60 minutes; overage was \$.06 cents a minute thereafter. My dad and I have always worked the "Jumble" and crossword puzzle which appears in our Knoxville newspaper and between the two of us we would often get all the words and answers. When we had difficulty in getting a word or the answer, Mother would look at the puzzle, smile and in less than a minute would usually come up with the right word and/or answer. Mother put Daddy and me to shame but she never rubbed it in other than saying, "That sure was an easy word." Then it was her turn to get the "Charles and Jane stare!"

Everything was going along smoothly with the Jumble and crossword puzzle until the month Daddy got the telephone bill. I am thankful I was not there because I understand Mother hit the ceiling. It seemed that not only did we talk the allotted 60 minutes but added another 600 minutes on top of that. Yes, 600 minutes and to quote Mother, "Do you realize how many hours that is?" From that experience, Mother took off her white gloves, ready to take us on, and she put her foot down. She kept an egg timer by her chair and whenever I called or Daddy/Mother called me, she started the timer. She was not about to let us talk that long again – and we did not!

Also during this time, whenever Mother, Daddy, and I took a vacation together, we stayed in constant contact with Bill. Hel was working and had the luxury of having an 800 number. We kept him posted on our trips, destination, the weather, etc. After using all our allotted time for calling my parents, I would call Bill asking him to call home and pass along information. It was amazing how quickly news traveled from Knoxville to Arizona and back to Oak Ridge and vice versa. Several years later when calling Oak Ridge from Knoxville became a local call, Mother retired her egg timer. But, we still chuckled about the time we talked over 600 minutes.