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Confessions of a Meter Reader

By one of Them

I know more about the customers of my company than the boss does, and he's been running this property for about 20 years. For example, I not only know their names and where they all live (in my district, that is) but I know how many children they have. ~~If they keep a dog I know his name and disposition.~~ I know whether the Mrs. is a good housekeeper and whether they pay their bills. I know who in the family is sick and what's the matter with them; I find out when the kids fail in school, and if the old man loses his job I know it before the neighbors do.

Bitten by Every Breed

I've been bitten by every breed of dog from Pekinese to Great Dane. When a new family moves into the district I generally have to call about three times before the watch dog gets over the idea that I'm after the family silver. Our company doctor keeps a drawer full of dog bite serum just for the meter readers. I've never been seriously injured, however, and generally I can convince my canine friends that my intentions are honorable. The dog's owner is always very sympathetic. I have never been bitten that the lady of the house didn't say to me: "I can't understand what's got into Fido; he never did that before." I've gotten so I don't mind it—much; so long as they don't tear my pants or munch on me. A mere nip is nothing.

Another thing I've learned is that many of my customers think their bills are high. This is puzzling. They don't kick about the grocer, or the laundry, or their clothier, but when I go to read the meter I frequently get this:



"My, the electric company must be making a lot of money. It's a wonder they wouldn't reduce the rate."

I ask the inquirer how much the bill was last month and nine times out of ten she can't tell me. They just seem to be "sold" on the idea that electricity costs more than it should. When I point out that the electric bill is nowhere near what the rent is, or the grocery bill or the cigarette budget, they just shake their heads and go right on thinking it's too high I guess, because they generally make the same remark the next month.

I'll bet that I've repaired a thousand electric irons, half as many cleaners and almost as many washers. When I come to read the meter, the customer figures that because I work for the electric company I know all about everything electrical. If the toaster don't toast or Junior's electric train is "kapoot" it's the meter reader to the rescue. It takes a lot of my time, and I sometimes have to finish my route on a gallop, but it makes the customer feel friendly toward me and toward the company. It

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Fruit Salad for Hot Days

Cut ripe cantaloupes in half, slice in $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick slices and peel. Arrange a slice of cantaloupe on lettuce. Place a half of peach in center of slice. Fill cavity of peach with diced watermelon. Pour fruit salad dressing over fruit and garnish with red raspberries.

FRUIT SALAD DRESSING

1 egg
2 T flour
 $\frac{1}{2}$ t dry mustard
few grains of salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ c lemon juice
 $\frac{3}{4}$ c pineapple juice
12 marshmallows

Beat egg until light and fluffy. Continue beating while adding dry ingredients and the lemon and pineapple juice. Place over hot water and cook, stirring constantly until mixture thickens. When thick add the marshmallows and stir until melted. Pour into a jar and chill. Use as desired over any fruit salad combination.

SOME COOKING DO'S and DON'T'S

Place the saucepan over the top burner, then turn on the gas valve. Not a unit of heat is wasted.

Let the oven heat-control regulate the flow of gas. Hands off! Don't peek! The range doesn't need you.

Don't be uneasy because the gas flame remains low after the fixed oven or broiler temperature is reached. A little gas goes a long way once the compartment is hot.

Allow one inch of space between oven dishes and sides of the oven. Free circulation of air gives even baked results.

Leave the oven door ajar for a few minutes after baking is ended to prevent condensation from a closed cooling oven. This prevents a stain around the oven door.

Store food in the warming compartment, not in the oven.

Clean the broiler pan after each operation just as you wash saucepans.

Remove spilled foods on the range or in the oven at once with a clean, dry cloth or paper towel. When the range is cold, wash with mild soap and water, rinse, and wipe dry.

Keep top burner areas clean by wiping off after each meal. Burner heads are protected from spill-overs, but if you have been unduly careless, brush the burner free of food.

TOPICS FOR HOME SERVICE DEMONSTRATIONS

WED., July 14 — "Summer Cakes"

WED., July 21 — "More Canning Information"

WED., July 28 — "Refrigerator Dinners"

WED., Aug. 4 — "Oven-Cooked Meals"

Held in Home Service Department in basement of R. G. & E. Building, 89 East Avenue, every Wednesday at 2:00 P. M.

No Wonder They Envy Us

No wonder the American standard of living excites the envy of the world. Seventy-one per cent of the homes in the United States have radios and about 25 per cent have automatic refrigerators. In Germany 36 per cent have radios and one-third of one per cent possess modern refrigerators. Fourteen per cent of French homes are equipped with radios and only one-fifth of one per cent enjoy the advantages of automatic refrigeration.

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never does any harm to be friendly and interested.

Incidentally, our company is pretty careful in its selection of meter readers. We've got to be clean because we go into people's homes. We've got to be accurate. We've got to be honest. (Once I was laid off for a week because a lady accused me of taking her diamond ring. She laid it on a shelf in the basement while she was washing out a few things and I read the meter while she was hanging the clothes out. I didn't even see the darn thing but the company couldn't afford to take a chance and when she squawked I was pulled off the job. The company investigated and learned that she subsequently found the ring in her apron pocket. I got paid for my time off and the next time I read the meter she said she was sorry and offered me 50 cents.)



Some Common Questions

Here are questions we generally get several times in the course of a day's work:

"Do you get a commission on my bill?" (I don't.)

"My meter must be wrong. Mrs. So-and-so's bill is only half what mine is." (The lady who asked this question lives in a 12 room dutch colonial, has four children and keeps servants. Mrs. So-and-so and her husband live in a 5 room bungalow and have neither children nor servants.)

"Are you tracking mud down my clean cellar stairs?" (No Ma'am!)

Several times I've been requisitioned to jounce the baby while his mother made an important phone call. Some nice old ladies make it a point to give me cookies (one of them spoils it all by giving me the third degree in an effort to find out something about her neighbors.) Twice the screams of my customers have brought me to the rescue—once from a mouse who had her "treed" on a kitchen table, and once from a husband with a mild attack of D.T's.



I have been reading meters and meeting the public for a good many years but still I cannot comprehend some of the viewpoints I encounter among my customers.

Why is it that the butcher's scales are never questioned, but the electric meter is always fast?

Why do my customers uncomplainingly pay three times its worth for a useless knickknack and then roar at 9 cents a day for electric service?

Dogs Will Still Bite

Why, when other concerns advertise themselves is it considered good business; but when my company prints an institutional advertisement, it's propaganda.

Our service is cheaper than most anything else the customer buys and none of our security holders get more than about 4 or 5% on their investment. That doesn't strike me as unreasonable.

I think some day we will all wake up and realize that the electric companies have been doing a pretty fine job, reducing rates wherever possible and not exploiting their customers—at the same time paying taxes at the rate of 15c for every dollar we take in. When that happens my life will be a lot more pleasant than it is now.

I expect, however, the dogs will still bite me.

(Reprinted from Public Service Magazine)



The average family spends about twice as much for gasoline, oil and motor repairs as it does for gas and electric service.



Radio announcers do a lot of stumbling over two words—"judiciary" and "meteorological." Try to say them rapidly yourself.



The gas industry has spent more than \$7,000,000 in the last twelve years in improving, testing and certifying gas appliances. That's why they are so efficient today and so attractive in line and design. The Testing Laboratories of the American Gas Association are the largest and best equipped in the world. The new gas ranges, for instance, must meet 529 different tests.

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Monday in a Hillendale Street Household

Monday morning, the family is awakened by our electric alarm clock. We arise, dress and my husband goes to the bathroom to shave with his electric razor. Hot water, heated by our new instantaneous gas water heater, makes washing and shaving (always a big job for Dad in the early A.M.) a real pleasure.

Daughter, after a luxurious stretch, arises and turns on the electric light and plugs in the electric curling iron to pretty up a bit. After hastily dressing I leave the family preparing for the day while I go down and turn on the electric radio to get the morning news. Soon the toast is being thoroughly browned in the electric toaster while the coffee bubbles merrily on the gas stove.

As soon as the family leave, I put the dishes in the electric dish washer and go to the basement to do the family washing with our electric machine. After hanging out the clothes to dry I go to the kitchen to mix a batch of cookies, using our electric mixer. When they are in the gas oven, a little tidying up is in order. Out comes the electric vacuum cleaner to do quickly and easily a job that used to take my Mother at least a half a day.

At noon, being alone for lunch, I explore the electric refrigerator for left-overs, which would have been thrown out if we still had our old-fashioned ice-box.

Daughter comes in hungry as usual and soon has a bowl of delicious popcorn in her lap, as a study stimulant, and popped in our electric popper. But now we must prepare for dinner and Dad. Again the gas range is called into use. Dad arrives and dinner is served. While we eat, coffee is being brewed in our electric percolator and we are entertained by the radio.

When we leave the table the dishes are again put in the electric dish washer, Dad picks up the evening paper and turns on the electric reading lamp, daughter goes to her room to study by her Better-Sight lamp while I do the family mending on my electric sewing machine. Soon the electric clock tells us it is time for bed, and although it it has been a busy day, I can rest well, thanks to my gas and electric servants.

Who will do the work and do it so well, day after day, as has been done for me by gas and electricity and modern appliances? Who can honestly say we pay too much after thinking it over? My bill for all services rendered will average about \$7.00 per month and to me it is money well spent, so let's hear no more about high cost of gas and electricity.

Lillian J. Olney, 22 Hillendale St.

Neighborhood Theatres To Show Homemaker Film

Rochester housewives will be very much interested in the Rochester Democrat & Chronicle's "School of Modern Living", which was presented at Loew's Rochester Theatre on June 26th and will be shown on seven consecutive Fridays in neighborhood theatres during July and August. The "School of Modern Living" is a combination of cooking school, fashion show and motion picture entertainment. The principal feature of the school is a motion picture film entitled "The Day of the Homemaker", which takes the audience through a complete day in the life of a modern woman from the awakening alarm of the electric clock in the morning to lights-out in late evening. The kitchen scenes were filmed in the R. G. & E. Home Service Department. One of the most interesting features is the way in which the film shows the marvelous transformation which can be made in household basements when a gas furnace is substituted for old-fashioned heating equipment and the cellar becomes a recreation room.

The "School of Modern Living" will be held on the following dates:

Friday, July 2—Riviera Theatre,
Lake Ave.

Friday, July 9—Dixie Theatre,
Portland Ave.

Friday, July 16—Liberty Theatre,
Driving Park Ave.

Friday, July 23—State Theatre,
Main St. East

Friday, July 30—Cameo Theatre,
Clinton Ave. N.

Friday, Aug. 6—Lake Theatre,
Lake Ave.

Modern Proverbs

A burnt child dreads the fire—and a burnt cake dreads the oven without heat control.

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It takes a lot of swallows to make a summer—and that's where ice cubes come in handy.

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None are so blind as those who will not see—but seeing is easy with a Better Sight Lamp.

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Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater, had a wife and couldn't keep her—probably because she had to run up and down stairs all day with an old-fashioned water heater.

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