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Cleveland Plain Dealer

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Lindbergh Stories Only Rivals to Sheppard Trial in Public Interest

Plain Dealer Swamped by Phone Call Flood

Not since Charles A. Lindbergh have so many people been so interested in a single news story.

Of course this is in reference to the long trial and conviction for murder of Dr. Samuel H. Sheppard.

Greater Clevelanders and men and women from states across the nation flooded the Plain Dealer telephone switchboard for weeks with one question: "What about Dr. Sam?"

Late yesterday, after the jury finally announced its verdict of guilty of murder in the second degree, the calls rolled in in record numbers.

Like Christmas Tree

The Plain Dealer switchboard was lighted up like a Christmas tree.

Thirty-two incoming telephone lines poured in the questions about Cleveland's most celebrated murder case in years.

"Not since the Lindbergh flight to Paris and, in later years, the trial of Bruno Richard Hauptmann for the kidnapping and murder of the Lindbergh baby have there been so many inquiries to this newspaper," said Mrs. Joan Yassanye, chief operator at the Plain Dealer.

Eleven operators under Mrs. Yassanye remembered only the Lindbergh case and the climatic moments of World War II as comparable in public interest to the Sheppard murder case.

Every Line Busy

"Every line opened up after the verdict," said Mrs. Yassanye. "Part of it was because some of the radio and television people asked their listeners and viewers to 'stand by.'"

"They didn't stand by. They called the Plain Dealer."

She said there were the usual crank calls.

"The jury ought to have its collective head examined," one caller exclaimed.

"The newspapers, above all, have convicted this man," another person said. "Especially the Plain Dealer."

Distance didn't mean anything to the callers.

Lines crackled from states around the country. Angry or perplexed persons, both for and against Dr. Sam, demanded information and opinions that would require a complete panel of judges to answer properly.

"What does this mean? What does that mean? Will there be a retrial?" were among the thousands of questions that buzzed operator. Extra help at the switchboard tried hard to cope with these.

"The jury's still out. The jury's gone to supper. The jury's gone to bed." The operators had only time for such answers in the days and nights before the verdict.

From N. Y. to 'Frisco

"The jury's out? Why don't you tell them to come in?" shouted a typical facetious caller in the middle of the deliberations.

But among all the shouts and cries of irate and excited newspaper readers there were quiet, long-distance voices of newspaper editors, calling for late information for late editions coast to coast.

From New York to San Francisco the question was the same: "Sheppard jury in yet?"

When the jury did come in, the crescendo of calls rose to the top bars and then—quiet. Except for one nightly question of added interest:

"When exactly is the Rose Bowl game?"



DR. RICHARD N. SHEPPARD asked his brother, Dr. Samuel H., at the murder scene: "Sam, did you have anything to do with this?" He was quoted in testimony by a state's witness.



MRS. RICHARD N. (DOROTHY) SHEPPARD was on the list of defense witnesses, but the defendant's lawyers rested without calling her to the stand.



INVESTIGATOR for the defendant and official medical consultant for his lawyers was Dr. Stephen A. Sheppard, who gave key testimony in the fight to save his brother, Dr. Samuel H., from prison.