

# ON THE PHONE

# TELEPHONE

When it comes to telephone usage, many a teen can relate to Jayme Carlock's version of the ideal routine.

"I'd probably call my friends every night. We'd probably just sit and talk for hours," said Jayme, 14, a parishioner at St. Patrick's Church in Mount Morris.

However, fantasy gets overshadowed by reality in Jayme's household. She said her parents allow her 15-minute phone calls if she has a heavy homework load, and longer calls after she finishes studying. That's assuming, of course, that Jayme can get a crack at the phone before her 11-year-old sister.

Jill Barriere likewise struggles for telephone time at her house.

"My dad always says that somebody might be trying to get a hold of us and there is no reason why I can't be on the phone for only like, 15 minutes," said Jill, 18, from Immaculate Conception Church in Ithaca.

Yet Jill acknowledged that her parents may be fighting a losing battle. "They are like, 'You can only be on the phone for no more than 15 minutes.' But they always forget and it doesn't last," she said.

Meanwhile, Elyse Lagana said her problems tend to begin almost as soon as she grabs the receiver.

"When I do use the phone, it's always, 'Get off, Elyse,'" said the 13-year-old from St. Mary's Church in Geneseo.

Jill acknowledged that telephone tie-ups are pretty much a given when teens are in the house.

"Teens have a lot of friends and there is much more to talk about when you are a teen, whether it is about the person you like or about what happened in school or just basic gossip," Jill said. "Girls, especially, are always gossiping and always talking about guys and stuff like that."

Elyse agreed that girls seem to log more phone time than boys.

"Girls are so much more talkative, I think. But I'm not a boy, so I may be wrong," she

remarked.

These days, teens have more and more options to maximize their phone usage. Answering machines, pagers, modems and mobile (cellular) phones are so much a part of our culture, it may be hard to fathom that fewer than 30 years ago, these items either had not been invented or were not yet available to the general public. In fact, push-button telephones were still considered a novelty.

Now, with the advent of cell phones, callers don't even need to be in a building or phone booth to chat. Jayme, for one, noted the usefulness of cell phones, saying she brings her mom's phone to her athletic events in case "I need to call home and there isn't a pay phone."

Jill, also, said she uses her family's cell phone when necessary.

"When I am driving somewhere, I keep a cell phone with me in case something happens," Jill said. "But I don't keep it on (to receive calls) unless I know someone will need to get a hold of me, like my parents."

Jill said she doesn't think teens should carry cell phones "just so they can talk to their friends."

Jayme concurred, saying that teens who chat in front of others on cell phones "are kind of showing off - 'Look, I have more money.'"

Two articles in the Oct. 9, 1999, edition of *Economist* magazine cite problems that accompany cell-phone usage:

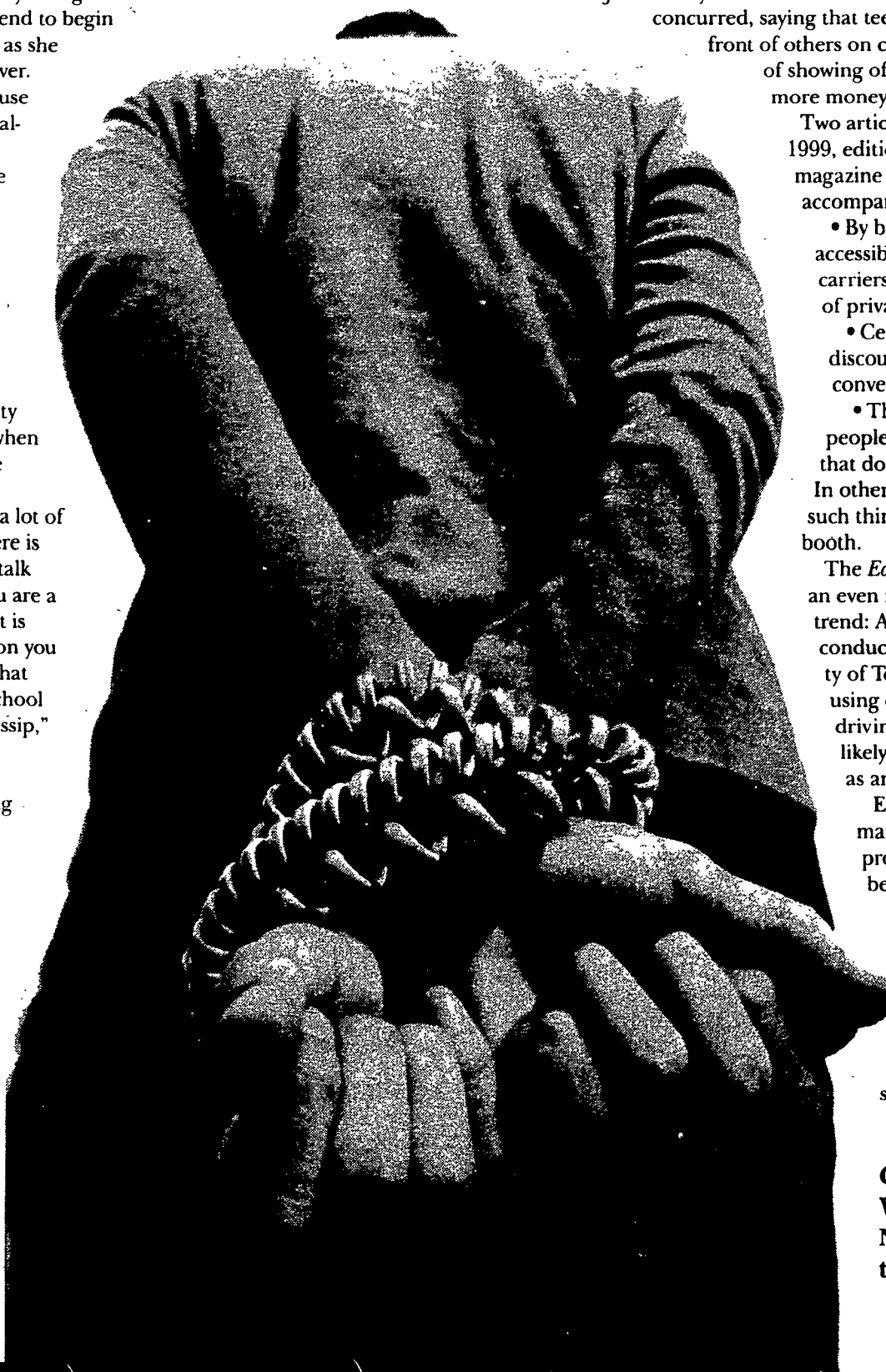
- By being more accessible, cell-phone carriers experience a loss of privacy.
  - Cell phones discourage face-to-face conversation with people.
  - They also force other people to endure chatter that doesn't involve them.
- In other words, there's no such thing as a cell-phone booth.

The *Economist* articles note an even more disturbing trend: According to a study conducted by the University of Toronto, people using cell phones while driving are *four times* as likely to have an accident as are other drivers.

Elyse suggested that many such drivers probably don't have to be on the phone in the first place.

"Who needs to call work if you're going to be there in five minutes anyway?" she remarked.

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# TIE-UPS