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Abstract       One item of serveral in what looks to be a weekly column. Ma Bell is cracking down on toll fraud, as illustrated by the recent behaviour of Illinois Bell. People who are using blue boxes should beware.

Keywords      toll fraud; blue box; Illinois Bell; Northbrook, IL; Lake Forest College

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# Tower Ticker

By Bob Wiedrich



It's not nice to fool Mother Bell.

That's why the old telephonic bat is out to prove just that. For her, it's a matter of economic survival.

In recent years, the Bell System has been losing as much as \$20 million annually to toll call cheats, people who resort to such sophisticated devices as a thing called a "blue box" to bypass equipment intended to insure collection of long distance charges.

The "blue box," in case you didn't know, can be quite common in some quarters.

If you know the right people, you can purchase one for about \$2,000 and buy yourself a free ride into the long distance phone network that spans the nation thru direct dial.

Now, we're not going to tell you how a "blue box" works or even what one looks like.

But let us assure you of this.

Ma Bell is gathering her skirts in righteous indignation. And if the old gal catches you slipping her a financial mickey, she'll surely lower the boom.

Just a few weeks ago, Illinois Bell security agents snared a Northbrook man with 25 of the "blue boxes" in his home.

And not long before that, phone company sleuths collared a 19-year-old Lake Forest College sophomore, charging him with chiseling an estimated \$1,500 in toll free toll calls to his multitude of friends around the country. His successes were also attributed to the purchase of a "blue box."

Thus far this year, various companies of the Bell System have caused the arrest of 492 confidence men and women whispering their sweet nothings across limitless distances at the cheapest price in town. A total of 401 have been convicted; most of the rest are awaiting trial.

It's all part of a Bell System crack-down. So if you're thinking of opening this particular Pandora's box, forget it.

Remember what happened to Pandora. She turned blue with all the troubles of the world!

**Local Affairs:** Several of a Chicago's attorney's filthy-minded clients, who are in the pornography purveying business, recently asked for a legal opinion on the advisability of founding an obscene telephone call service catering to lonely ladies who favor that sort of thing.

But after researching Illinois law into just how far one can go in exploiting the seamy side of life, the attorney advised that the time has not yet come.

or, should we say, raunchy enough, yet.

**Show Business:** Yousef Kouyoumjian, a native-born Armenian who has prospered for the past decade as owner of the Baghdad Cabaret in San Francisco, hopes to make a mint carrying animated navels to the Middle East, fabled land of the belly dancer and whirling dervish.

Yousef paused in the city the other day to display the 22-foot-long Dodge Motor Home in which he [a bachelor] and two Nob Hill trained torso twirlers plan to journey several thousands miles thru France, Spain, and the Dark Continent to furnish a showcase for the American style of belly dancing.

They sail from New York Tuesday for Le Havre. And will then spend six months driving south to Gibraltar, across to Casablanca, and then on thru Tangiers, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, the Sudan, and eventually settling down for a two months stand in Ethiopia.

Yousef says there's a cultural revolution under way and he wants to cash in on it!

**On the Beat:** Johnny Cash and his wife, June Carter, stopped by Chicago's Universal Recording Studios to view the film entitled, "Jesus," in which he narrates and sings for the Luther Corporation of Tennessee. Then he went on to the sparkling DuQuoin State Fair, which opened its 50th anniversary celebration Saturday. On tap are such other stars as Vikki Carr, Tex Beneke, and Bob Hope, who'll do his thing Labor Day night.

**Bonnie Koloc** opens tonight at Mister Kelly's with Ellen Mellwaine. . . . And comedian Bobby Wick joins songstress Micki Lynn on stage at the Chicago Playboy Club. . . . Meson del Lago, a new Mexican restaurant, debuts in November or December at 158 E. Ontario St. . . . Martha Raye was the recipient of a surprise birthday party last night, thanks to the cast and crew of "Everybody Loves Opal" at Pheasant Run Playhouse.

**Around Town:** Frank Sinatra Jr. plans to bunk at the Oxford House Friday before going on to Bill Wellman's Bridge-Vu Theater at Valparaiso, Ind., for a one night stand. . . . Associate Circuit Judge Thomas Walsh's wife, Jean, is back home after five weeks of recuperation for a broken hip in North Carolina. . . . And Burt and Katja Kallick of La Cheminee restaurant have returned from a Caribbean sojourn.

**Matchman Warren Seaman** claims he shot an arrow into the polluted air. And believes it or not, it stuck right there!

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