

Play ball, Honey!

"We'll drag and line our own fields if we have to," said Clara Simpson whose battle to put 164 women in baseball uniforms won out when Farmington's Women Softball Slowpitch League's season started this week.

Ms. Simpson guesses the average age of the players is 25. Most of the women are married, most are working women, and many are mothers. She has been playing ball for 15 years with leagues that jockeyed back and forth between shaky and pretty successful as "administrator, president, treasurer and the whole works I just wanted it to go so bad."

She's run into trouble getting fields and some of the teams have had trouble getting a sponsor. Some teams never did get a sponsor so "they just like to play ball," she said.

She added that she could have put another two teams in the league if she had more space to play.

"I think we turned away about 70 girls during the tryouts. Some didn't want the responsibility to be a manager or a captain. There was that kind of trouble too. So we limited ourselves to Farmington residents."

The temperature fell to a record low of 30 degrees on opening night but that kind of trouble didn't stop either the players or the fans, most of whom came with blankets and thermos, and dressed as though they were going to a football game.

Tournaments in the past have been played just for the fun of it, "but with any luck at all we'll have a tournament and trophies this season," Ms. Simpson said.

The league has already accepted an invitation to be played in Tawas this September, and all but two of the teams have sponsors.

Meanwhile, game time is Tuesday at City Park, Thursday at Drake Field, with two games scheduled each night, at 7:45 and 9:15 p.m.

Evert photos



The faceless reservationists

By DIANE LAW

His voice is loud, his speech is rude, often obscene. At times he is drunk or incoherent.

He represents the general public to many area reservations clerks. This description may seem exaggerated, but all too often it is accurate.

People who deal with people daily, usually by phone, are often treated as faceless, abstract objects on which the public vents its anger and frustration.

A caller ignores the fact that on the other end of the phone is a real person — not a machine.

Ultra-sophisticated computers tend to cause people to envision a mechanical robot lacking feelings and personality.

HOWEVER, reservationists are

as real as the customers they service . . . with one exception, perhaps.

Their jobs dictate that they must "keep their cool" when dealing with customers.

This hard-and-fast rule can cause them to be subjected to abuse.

Many reservation clerks, whether employed by hotels, airlines, or car rental companies, agree the most difficult aspect of their job is being courteous and patient with a rude customer.

Would the public be more polite, less demanding if they were in a face-to-face situation rather than on the phone?

This question was asked of a number of Southfield area reservationists and the answer was a resounding, "Yes!"

People tend to be more bold on the phone — if they had to face the reservationist, most would be too embarrassed to display such rudeness, they agreed.

COMMON COURTESY is lacking in phone habits, say many employees of local reservation offices.

"The simple saying of 'thank you' at the end of conversation is often neglected," said one Delta Airline reservation agent. "Some people just hang up without saying anything."

Donna, employed by a local Avis rent-a-car office explained:

"People think we have all the answers in front of us — they don't realize things change daily."

"In order to give them the best service, we have to check every-

thing out in the computer.

"People don't understand our procedures. They expect us to have all the answers in two seconds. When we don't, some customers get upset."

A MAJOR complaint among reservation clerks is the customer who waits until the last minute to book a car, flight or hotel arrangements during busy holiday seasons.

When told accommodations have been filled for weeks, these last-minute vacationers frequently don't believe it.

Others may try the "I am so-and-so" or "I know so-and-so" routine in an effort to obtain the impossible.

"This angle doesn't work either."

they are full, even for the allegedly important so-and-so," clerks agreed.

Karen, employed by Southfield's Howard Johnson motel, added:

"IF THEY don't call ahead to make reservations like everyone else, they shouldn't receive special treatment."

Communication, or lack of communication, is often the problem.

"People have a tendency not to listen," said a Pan American reservationist who prefers to remain unnamed. "They ask a question, then don't give you a chance to answer."

"It's very aggravating when you spend time computing a fare for a passenger, giving him flight information and then he calls back a few minutes later asking for the

same information because 'No one told him.'"

POSSIBLY the greatest endurance test for a reservationist is handling drunks.

Most frequently when working an afternoon or night shift, a reservationist encounters this. He's usually incoherent and becomes frustrated and often obscene when he isn't able to comprehend any information.

Although customers cause clerks to smile more often than frown, the rude, obnoxious person is a constant challenge to a reservationist's patience.

Avis' Donna sums it up: "Put yourself in our place — treat us like you would like to be treated."