

Pell City's Humming Lines Attributed To Jean Brandli

BY ROGER HAMMER

PELL CITY, Ala. (UPI) — Jean Brandli first came here Dec. 10, 1963, when fire leveled the small telephone exchange she owned. Two weeks later she had it back in operation and presented the community a new building on Christmas Eve.

This Summer she won approval of the Public Service Commission to borrow \$2.6 million from the Rural Electrification Agency to build a new exchange and virtually rebuild her whole system.

"We want to go first class. A lot of the people in the new exchange area are farmers and today's farmers are businessmen. They need the best service," she said.

FIRST CLASS for the 2700-customer exchange she will expand to more than 5000 includes direct dialing nationwide, underground cables and automatic number identification without need for operators.

Mrs. Brandli was in Russia on the People-To-People Exchange studying their methods when she learned she had been named Telephone Woman of the Year by the independent companies of Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana.

She was busy at the moment answering questions from Russians. They wanted to know if she was a capitalist, a little awed at a woman holding the presidency of two phone companies (at Lexington, Va., and Pell City).

She told them, "Certainly!" Then proceeded to outline the medical, retirement and other benefits her small company provided. "They were surprised. They thought the state would provide those things."

Mrs. Brandli has listings in Who's Who in the South, and is president of the Chamber of Commerce and Business and Professional Women's Club.

RESPECT FOR her ability came shortly after her arrival.

"I was in Lexington when I got a call that our building had burned and all our equipment with it. I caught the first plane and have been here ever since," she said.

Standing there in the Winter cold, with a million dollar investment in ashes at her feet, you wouldn't have blamed her if she caught the first plane back.

She went to work, putting an old switchboard in the corner of the office to use and buying a whole telephone

company building from Enterprise, 250 miles away.

"IT WAS A challenge. Nothing's fun unless there's a challenge. When I stood there and realized 2000 people couldn't call a doctor, police or firemen, I knew I had to do something," she said.

Mrs. Brandli said Southern men are more willing to accept women in business than Northern businessmen. "They don't have the prejudices for one thing. I guess they had to accept so much after the war, nothing surprises them."

She advises Southern women who want to do well in the business world, "Don't present bankers, public officials or other men with anything foolish or not well thought out."