

# the Westerner

Omaha Works  
March 1981



It's all history now — Page 7

# for your information

Let's hear it for the people in production control, transportation, network distribution and manufacturing Depts. 441 and 445. On February 27, the Works received an urgent call from the Product Line Planning and Management organization for international sales at the Guilford Center in Greensboro, N.C. AT&T International had sold a two-week training course to the Telecommunications Agency of Taiwan, which included training regarding 710 connectors.

Somehow, a mix-up resulted in the agency receiving an order short of the number of 710 connectors needed to conduct the course. In a matter of two hours from the time the Omaha Works was called in to help, 11,640 connectors and five 710 tool mounts were ready for shipment. They were loaded on a flight to Los Angeles where they would be transferred to another flight to Taiwan.

Fast and dependable assistance like this helps to stimulate international sales of our products . . .

. . . Federal guidelines to maintain heating temperatures at no more than 65 degrees and cooling temperatures at no less than 78 degrees have been rescinded. Coincidentally, Western Electric has been practicing a policy similar to the rescinded guidelines. However, the company will continue to adhere to its policy despite the federal change.

## energy . . .

### less is more

IF YOU THINK you're seeing double, you're right — in more ways than one. Twins Dean and Darol Donaldson are using the newly installed double doors located on the west side of the main cafeteria. The doors were installed to cut down on drafts and improve comfort for those in the area. The doors should save the Works an estimated \$1,600 yearly in heating and cooling costs. Darol Donaldson, an inspector in Dept. 361, is standing at left. Dean, a floorhand in the stub cable section of Dept. 445, is at right. Or is it the other way around . . . ?

## Spring party planned



Photo by Robin Boe, Linda Ryan

WHO IS THAT behind the filmy veil of a belly dancer's outfit? To find out, attend the WEOMA Club's annual spring party April 25 at the Holiday Inn, 72nd and Grover streets. Not just one, but four belly dancers — including the mysterious woman pictured — will entertain the audience. A cocktail hour will begin at 5:30 p.m. with dinner at 6:30 p.m. The evening will include a style show and awarding of prizes. Afterward, Jay Ridenour of Dept. 728 will play records for audience dancing. Tickets for the event cost \$9.75.



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Editor

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**Western Electric**

# service anniversaries

## march

### 20 years

H. A. Hoschar

### 15 years

S. K. Arnold  
C. W. Baker  
J. R. Bunting  
R. A. Fleming  
T. A. Heim  
W. J. Lane  
W. A. Lawson Jr.  
H. E. Leonard Jr.  
B. S. Luebbert  
D. D. Steinpreis

D. B. Stinson  
A. P. Vecchio  
F. E. Velasquez  
D. S. Verbocy  
E. L. Waldron Jr.  
E. A. Weil  
R. R. Willms  
W. C. Wyszenski  
L. L. Young

### 10 years

C. B. Bloomer  
S. N. Cubrich  
P. K. Griffin  
M. E. O'Kane  
T. E. Pallas Jr.

P. K. Reding  
R. H. Thrasher  
G. A. Waddell  
L. K. Windels



Ken Frame  
30 years  
3/19/51



Herb Streng  
30 years  
3/6/51

Not pictured:  
Frank Bensching  
30 years  
3/9/51



Bob Rist  
30 years  
3/27/51



Henry Gruenemeyer  
35 years  
3/18/46



Edward Faust  
25 years  
3/18/56



John Ulicky  
25 years  
3/16/56



Donald Smetter  
35 years  
3/5/46

## retirements



Kevin Cahill  
42 years



Eugene (Les) Roberts  
29 years



Lillian Vie  
23 years



Raymond Olson  
35 years



Ronald VanSkiver  
36 years



Bill Nussrallah  
21 years

Not pictured:  
Ray Kniewel—44 years  
Ed Karohl—23 years  
Danny Street—15 years

## BSSP/SSP results

The following are the January unit values for both the Bell System Savings Plan (BSSP) and the Savings and Security Plan for non-salaried employees (SSP):

	BSSP			SSP	
	Units Value	Units Credited Per Dollar		Units Value	Units Credited Per Dollar
AT&T	2.1872	0.4571	AT&T	1.0215	0.9789
Government Obligations	2.2506	0.4443	Guaranteed		
Equity Portfolio	1.9035	0.5253	Interest Fund	1.1991	0.8339
Guaranteed					
Interest Fund	1.1082	0.9022			

## suggestion box

Who would think that something as common as a chair glide could prove useful in the assembly of 710 connectors? **Pat Reding**, that's who.

Pat's a machine operator in Dept. 435 who figured that a device somewhat similar to a chair glide would be



Pat Reding

helpful in one of the stages of assembling 710 connectors. She submitted her idea to the employee suggestion program and was awarded \$1,100.

It's the first award she has received in the program, she said, admitting the amount really took her by surprise. Perhaps she will find it more believable when she's watching a new television set she hopes to buy with her winnings.

Other employees who have received suggestion awards include:

**John Ogden**, Dept. 746, \$215.  
**Ronald Hallett**, Dept. 435, \$100.  
**Leslie Domina**, Dept. 201, \$100.  
**Dean Hallam**, Dept. 253, \$100.

# How safe are we?

Don't get too smug about the fine safety record we achieved at the Omaha Works last year.

The year 1980 was second only to 1979 in having the best on-job safety record in Works history.

But while safety awareness has been excellent during working hours, it is faltering away from the work environment. The safety department has determined that 243 lost-time, off-job injuries were reported at the Works last year. That's more than 12 times the number of on-job disabling injuries recorded for the same year.

"We're looking for ways to help employees be more safe in their homes without intruding into their private lives," said safety department chief Dick Veach. He admitted, however, it is perplexing

why safety consciousness so evident on the job apparently is lacking in the home environment.

The off-job injuries which occurred last year included auto accidents, strains and sprains, and injuries resulting from falls. One of the injuries recorded at the Works resulted in death; similar injuries in system-wide Western Electric caused 24 fatalities.

The safety department chief speculated that lack of safety features and warning systems in and around the home, such as those within the Works, may be one reason why off-job injuries are so high. Basically, he thinks the injury rate is the result of "sheer carelessness" and not taking the need for safety seriously.

"If they don't already now, people are going to have to start taking precautions such as wearing seatbelts and 'child-proofing' their homes," he said. He said the safety department welcomes employee feedback to help resolve the off-job safety problem. Employees should call Ed Hamell, Ext. 3583.

On these pages are two stories meant to illustrate the seriousness of the problem. One is an employee's account of how carelessness during leisure hours almost cost her sight in an eye. The other is a woman's story about how losing her eyesight has changed her life.

## Judy's story

There's a little bit of "klutz" in all of us and Judy Couchman is no exception.

Bumping into objects or spilling things is to be expected now and then. An occurrence of this nature is often humorous than injurious, said Judy, a member of the Works public relations staff.

Judy had never considered herself a sports enthusiast, partly because she had convinced herself her abilities for most sports were inadequate, she said. Then someone invited her to play racquetball.

"I thought I'd finally found a sport I really liked," Judy said, adding she was pleased that racquetball provided her a chance to improve her physical fitness. Eventually, she joined a league and began playing once a week.

At first, Judy was hit by the ball "at all parts of my body, which is par for a beginner," she said. While she was aware other racquetball players wore safety goggles, Judy didn't like the idea of wearing her contact lenses ("I'd have to get used to them") with the goggles.

Admitting to a tinge of vanity, "I thought the goggles were really ugly," she said. Besides, she figured her

## Pat's story

Pat Newman is an active woman who loves to go roller skating and holds an orange belt in mookido, a form of self-defense.

Like many homemakers today, she has returned to school for a college degree. She's a sophomore at Midlands Lutheran College in Fremont, majoring in psychology in preparation for a career in counseling.

But unlike most people who do these kinds of things, Pat is blind. And when she lost her eyesight about eight years ago, there was a period when she expected to never be able to do many of the things she loves.

Because of a congenital condition, Pat's vision had been poor and she wore glasses. Despite her poor eyesight, "I still took it for granted," she said.

Gradually, she noticed that her perception of distances was worsening and people's faces became less distinct. She went to several doctors, but at first none could tell her what to expect.

When it became certain that she would lose sight in both eyes, "I told my

husband I didn't want to live," she admitted. "You go through a period of denial . . . fortunately, the people around me were very supportive."

**PAT'S HUSBAND**, Jerry, is a third-shift grinding operator in the mini relay core grinding section of Dept. 723. He said what followed "was a hard two years — a lot of crying and adjusting" on the part of Pat, himself and their daughter, Michelle.

Pat suspects her adjustment to blindness was easier than for a person who had lost his sight suddenly because of an accident. "It was a slow, progressive thing," she said. Still, the harsh realities of the situation were devastating.

Her major sense of loss was "I realized I would never see my daughter again," she said. Pat worried about how she would take care of her daughter, who was about age 10 at the time. She wondered about how she would do the housework and cooking for her family.

"One of the hardest things was knowing I couldn't just walk out the door when I wanted to — having to rely on

others" was a major adjustment, she said.

Pat began to study braille and made arrangements to go to San Rafael, Calif., for match-up and training with a guide dog. In San Rafael, she spent a month in intensive studies learning all the special commands, hand movements and footwork involved in having a guide dog.

It was an enormous task "to let the dog have your full confidence," Pat recalled. Today, Pat finds the second guide dog she has owned — Ruffle — a valued and trusted companion.

Both Pat and Jerry feel that they have adapted to Pat's handicap quite well. "I know there are simpler ways of doing things," Pat said, but she's able to go about many daily tasks "without giving it a second thought." She shops for her own clothes and tackles her college studies through tape-recorded textbooks.

**SURE, SHE** still becomes frustrated when she encounters things she cannot do ("like helping my husband paint the

normal eyeglasses would provide her enough protection against a hurled ball . . . "I just didn't worry about it."

**JUDY FIGURED** wrong. One night as she was playing racquetball, she turned to see from which direction the ball would come. Her partner hit the ball directly into Judy's right eye.

Her glasses flew off her face, the frames broken but lenses unshattered. The impact left Judy stunned as she fell to the floor and people gathered around her to help.

Under an ice pack and hearing assurances that "everything will be okay," Judy had no idea what was happening. "I thought I would be okay but I was worried because I couldn't see properly," she said.

Because she didn't want to overreact, at first Judy considered not going to a doctor immediately. By the time a friend had arrived to drive her home, Judy had decided to stop by a hospital.

"We were laughing all the way about how bizarre the whole thing was," Judy recalled. "Neither of us took it seriously." They even stopped on the way to fill the gas tank.

(Continued on Page 8)

*Judy considered safety goggles too ugly to wear — "I just didn't worry about it."*



house") or when people, in their ignorance, assume she is totally helpless.

Nor does she pretend to be content with her handicap — "I'd give anything to have my eyesight back," she said.

But if anything good is to come from her loss, it is the development of a real appreciation for one's good health. Both Pat and Jerry agree that what happened to her has made their whole family much more safety-conscious and protective of their health.

Pat's a real stickler about people who should wear eyeglasses and don't because they think it detracts from their looks. "They don't realize how lucky they are," she said.

"I've caught myself not putting on my safety glasses," Jerry admitted. "Then I think of my wife and what she's been through. She's helped me realize not to take my health for granted.

"We learned how valuable eyesight is the hard way," he continued. By sharing this story, both Pat and Jerry hope others will learn that lesson, too . . . "without the agony that could go with it."

# The Omaha Works in 1981 . . .

Chuck Meetsma is not a man to mince his words.

"1981 is going to be a tough year for the corporation," said the Omaha Works general manager. A combination of continued inflationary cost pressures during a year of "essentially flat sales" already is having "a substantial impact on our earnings outlook for the year," he said.

But Meetsma stressed that while the challenges ahead will be tough, that's not to say they will be impossible to meet. What it does mean is an intensified commitment by every employee to get the job done, and done well.

In 1980, the Works made a major adjustment in its production programs to coincide with decreased demand for many of its products, he said. During January and February of this year, the output level posed "a slightly better picture than we were looking at just a few months ago." However, Meetsma cautioned that even at that level, "our output is still only 80 percent of our capacity."

Aside from ups and downs in individual shops, "our latest view of our production program suggests we will be operating at about the same levels

throughout the year as in January and February," he said. Still, with operating volume remaining at 80 percent of capacity, fixed costs and expenses will continue. "It is absolutely essential that we control our other costs as well as we can," he stated.

To help bolster Works output, "We look forward to introducing a number of new products into our product line this year," Meetsma said. Among them is a new 80-type FDI cabinet, "a larger and improved version of our present feeder distribution interface cabinet line." During the first part of March, field trial units already were being assembled in the shops. Additional new apparatus items are to be introduced throughout the rest of the year, he added.

Meetsma said a new plenum cable is slated to go into production in the cable shop tentatively during the third quarter of 1981. The Works was selected to manufacture this "entirely new product," a flame-resistant cable for office buildings which eliminates the need for conduit. Also during the year, conversion of all sheathing lines to a new waterproof filling compound will be completed.

Coupled with new product additions will be "substantial capacity increases in a number of our products, principally in our modular connector line," the general manager noted. Planning, meanwhile, will continue to enhance our cable and network distribution product lines in an effort to attract new business.

While introducing and adapting to new products in itself is an enormous challenge, employees will have to concentrate their efforts on other challenges just as demanding. Meetsma included the following as primary challenges for the remainder of 1981:

**1. Finances.** If the Works is to meet its financial obligations, a close watch must be kept on such items as efficiency, defective work, material and supplies usage, expenses in all categories and absence payments. A good solid performance in these areas "will help assure the cost competitiveness of the things we make and the viability of our business in the future."

One visible impact on this year's operations will be "very stringent and aggressive efforts to reduce costs," Meetsma said. "Unfortunately, this will include some expense employee reductions." He emphasized that "we just cannot afford to do some of the things we have been able to do during the past few years of increasing levels of business."

**2. Quality.** In an increasingly competitive marketplace, the quality and reliab-

ility of Works products "remains one of our most important selling points." The general manager called for a strengthened commitment to making our products with the care and pride that have been our hallmark in the past.

**3. Service.** Employees already have demonstrated an ability to serve our customers well by delivering products when promised, Meetsma said. Along with cost and quality control, "fine service will help assure a steady growth of our business."

**4. Safety.** Given the many and difficult tasks ahead of us, accomplishing them safely is of highest priority. He encouraged employees to continue to build on the fine work safety record established over the past two years.

**5. Communications.** An understanding of objectives becomes even more vital in the midst of change. Only then can we be sure that the individual jobs we are doing are "helping to take us in the right direction." Each of us must strive for good, open, healthy management-employee relations in our daily activities.

**6. Opportunity.** While Meetsma acknowledges that 1981 will be a lean year for employment opportunities, the search for ways to develop human resources in all areas cannot end. Furthermore, the practice of equal opportunity within the work regimen must be fostered at all times regardless of race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

Meetsma pointed out that the year ahead will be a crucial period for the entire Bell System, not just Western Electric. Dramatic changes will continue throughout the industry, but specifically, the decisions of regulatory bodies, current litigation and potential legislation affecting the Bell System remain unclear.

"But while we must anticipate these changes and be prepared to respond to them, we cannot become preoccupied with the future at the expense of the many important things we must do here and now at the Omaha Works," he cautioned.

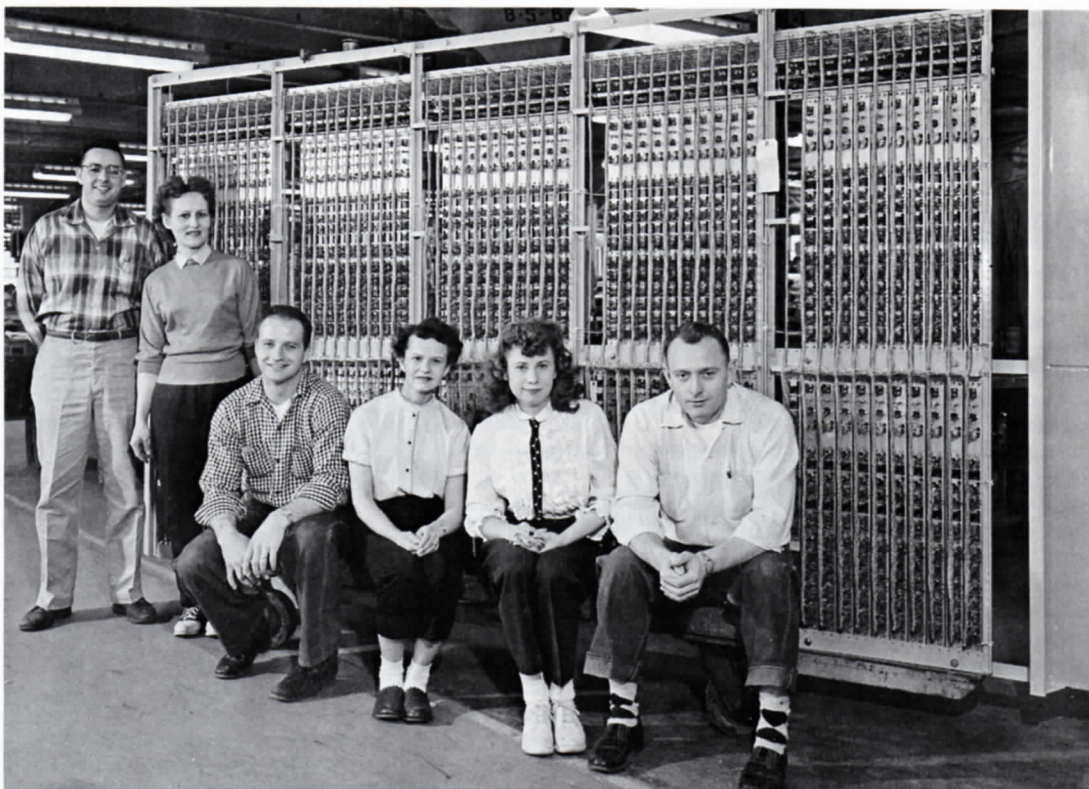
That "here and now" consists of more of the kinds of challenges Works employees have overcome in the past, Meetsma said. The key to meeting the new challenges ahead, surrounded by uncertainties, is that more than ever we must work together with determination and in cooperation, he added.

"I'm confident that as we work together to manage today's business well, we will be shaping our participation as individuals and as an organization in the business of tomorrow."



VERIFY . . . To help assure quality, Grace Rupe of Dept. 728 (seated) rechecks a problem with a mini-relay for inspector Rita Sobczak of Dept. 361.

EARLY HIRES . . . Can you guess which four of these early-day employees remain on the Works' roll? Posed in front of a crossbar frame are (from left) Gene Saab, Lela Brown, Roland Cooper, Delores Martin, Patricia Klippert and Paul Elvers.



## . . . And the way we were

In the beginning, there were two buildings.

Before we officially became the Omaha Works at our present location, we operated as a pilot plant out of "the old Ford building" at 16th and Cuming streets and the former Sidles building at 19th and Howard streets.

Occupancy of the pilot plant began in April 1956 — almost 25 years ago — when 13 employees reported to work. By July 1958, that number had grown to about 1,200 employees and decreased thereafter as personnel began moving into permanent quarters at 120th and I streets (latter 1958).

The five-story Ford building was called the A Building; the four-story former Sidles building was known as the B Building. Both housed offices and manufacturing operations.

In those early days, manufacturing included piece part work on mounting plates, crossbar switches and wire spring relays; assembly, wiring and testing operations on dial central office crossbar equipment and central office automatic message accounting equipment; electro-plating operations; and eventually tool construction and tool and machine repair, among other operations.

While renovation work was being done to the pilot plant buildings, employees were learning the jobs and skills that were the foundation of the Omaha

Works. For some, it meant a transfer from other Western Electric locations. For others, it was the start of a whole new job experience.

Many of the plant's early employees remain on the job today. With a little prodding, they'll share some of their nostalgic memories.

"It was the start of a different life from anything I'd ever done before," recalls **Lillian Rozmus**, an assembler in Dept. 441. Lillian used to reweave clothing before starting as a coil winder in the B Building. The hand-winding job "went a lot slower" in those days, she said, "and I can remember trading shifts every other month, too," a practice shared by all.

**Lela Brown**, an inspector in Dept. 361, checked groceries at downtown's Central Market before coming to Western Electric. She recalls walking the "catwalk," a pedestrian overpass built to span railroad tracks between the A Building and the parking lot.

"We were all in the same boat," she said, explaining that few employees were experienced in their new jobs. They learned as they worked, and when mistakes were made, "you remembered it." But, she added, "I remember we really enjoyed it."

"It was a really friendly place — we all knew each other by name," said **Marie Fowler**, a secretary for Organization 10. One day, a clock fell off the wall — no

doubt trying to keep up with the hard-working employees, she quipped.

And work hard they did. Dept. 441 section chief **Lowell Iske** remembers carrying parts and big bottles of drinking water up four flights of stairs when the elevator was out of service. **Paul Elvers**, a section chief in Dept. 445, used to combine his job of assembling EA-type relays with helping to clean restrooms.

Stockkeeper **Bob White** of Dept. 411 was the seventh employee hired by the pilot plant. He ran the stationery storeroom, unloaded trucks and swept floors. Today, Bob uses computer tab runs to

(Continued on Page 8)

### On the cover

Ed Arnone, a Statistical Quality Control (SQC) manufacturing difficulties investigator in 1957 when the photo was taken, reviews a quality chart with an early Works employee, Betty Harding. Herb Brinke was her section chief in the A Building. The work being reviewed involved mounting inductors onto mounting plates which were used in crossbar frames. Betty and Herb have since left the company (Herb retired in 1979) and Ed is now manufacturing manager, network distribution apparatus and precision tools (Organization 440).

# Threat to eyesight altered values

(Continued from Page 5)

At the hospital, a doctor examined Judy and told her he wanted to call in an eye specialist. Still not taking the matter seriously, she walked around the corridor and talked with her friend, waiting for the specialist to arrive.

The specialist told Judy she would have to stay in the hospital, and made a point of telling her she couldn't move around in bed, much less get out of bed.

Immediately, she began to negotiate: Could she go home and get her hair dryer? Couldn't she at least go home and change into clean clothes first? "I still couldn't believe the seriousness," Judy said, even when the doctor told her she would be a patient for at least five days. More important, he said if internal bleeding persisted, she could lose her sight in her right eye.

**ONCE SHE** was settled in her hospital room, Judy came to believe that what the doctor was saying was true. Still, she didn't panic. She attributed her calmness and confidence to her Christian beliefs, she said.

"I knew that even if I lost my sight, it'd work out for the best — but I really didn't think I'd lose my sight," Judy recalled.

Sometimes, perhaps because she was

so confident, Judy would lift herself in bed. She would barter with the nurses for the right to wash her hair, and one time the doctor interrupted her as she applied makeup to her unbandaged eye.

Despite all that had happened, Judy still was concerned about her appearance: Would there be scarring? Would her eye look glazed?

Fortunately, Judy's eye healed and her vision returned to normal. Not until she returned to work, however, did the ordeal impact upon her.

"My whole career is based on my

ability to see — to write and design," Judy said. "You don't know how much you appreciate your eyesight until you lose it or almost lose it."

Referring to her original disdain for safety equipment because she thought it unattractive, "I realize now how frivolous my values were... here I could have lost my eyesight.

"I'm humbled by the fact that God chose to spare me," she said. "It's really reoriented my value system. From now on, I'll be careful."

## The Works 25 years ago: The way we were

(Continued from Page 7)

keep track of storeroom materials. "Back then, you worked off your memory," he said.

Stock maintenance clerk **Ken Meisinger** of Dept. 413 remembers being in too much of a hurry one day on his way to the dock of the B Building. He was dashing through windowless double doors when he heard a loud thump. On the other side of the door he discovered, "I had flattened one of the managers, Tom Tomiska."

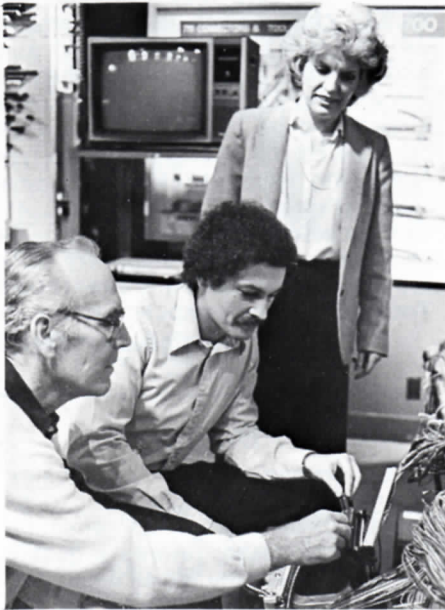
When **George Ricker** was laid off from a construction job in 1956, he took a job as a cable former at the pilot plant for

\$1.40 an hour. He intended it to be a temporary job between construction work. Almost 25 years of service later, he's a pipe fitter in Dept. 744.

George confessed to taking part in some early-day shenanigans, which may have perplexed the community with regard to our line of business.

It seems that large beetles ("june bugs") were plentiful at the A Building during the night shift. "We used to attach repair tags to their bodies (without hampering ability to fly) and throw them out the window," George said.

The tags stated: "If found, return to Western Electric."



**CLASS DEMO . . .** Gene Roberts (left), an instructor for the Dublin Training Center, demonstrates to students Bruce Schwaegel and Alice Gaull how the Works-manufactured 835A-1 cutter-presser tool operates. Bruce is an analyst with the Southwestern Account Management team; Alice is a member of the Product Line Planning and Management organization in Springfield, N.J.

## Works events highlight customer need

As competition in the marketplace increases, getting to know the customer and learning how to meet his needs takes on added importance. On two recent occasions, the Omaha Works played a role in communicating with the customer and working on ways to recognize and deal with his needs.

Earlier this year, representatives from Bell Canada visited the Works to review factory testing and auditing procedures. Bell Canada was planning to purchase test set equipment and was interested in "certifying" the Works as a supplier. Hosted by the staff of the Product Display Center, the visitors were taken on a tour of the shops.

In February, the display center was the site of a training course primarily for Account Management personnel. The course, conducted by Western Electric's Dublin Training Center, focused on the company's products and meeting the needs of our customers.



**INSPECTING . . .** Ruby Stack of Dept. 441 assembles test set equipment while Jack Davis (white shirt) of Dept. 473 explains the product to a group including visitors from Bell Canada.