



Hello, Central, give me Heaven

CIRCLE 6-6483, New York, is one of the busiest telephone numbers in America. It's held by Rev. J. J. D. Hall, retired Episcopal clergyman who gives one-minute sermons to all who phone him. Several hundred call daily. Despite "busy" signals, 140,000 have reached him by phone in the last 20 months.

It all started in 1940, when the Rev. Mr. Hall was abed recovering from an illness. The phone rang. A distracted wife trying to locate her wayward husband was on the phone. When she heard an unfamiliar voice, she mumbled, "Sorry; wrong number." Mr. Hall recalls: "In a flash I shouted, 'Hold on, sister; you've got the right number. Do you read your Bible and pray?'" They talked a while. By midnight 15 of her acquaintances had called him, confiding their troubles. His fame spread by word of mouth.

"Dad" Hall, formerly of Birmingham, Ala., lives near his phone in a cramped apartment off Times Square. He's 79. Three elderly women relieve him by giving some of the phone sermons. Most callers are lonely, have troubled consciences, or want him to arbitrate family quarrels. Some are hysterical, say they are going to jump out the window. To these Mr. Hall lectures thus: "Brother, you can't kill yourself. All you can do is change your location." Ends all talks by urging callers to "pray, read your Bible, and walk with the Lord." Endowments from hundreds of admirers support his work.

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