



Inquirer photos by ALEXANDER McCaughey

### Stan Pokras Listens to Request

Pokras, 36, seeks Philadelphia's 'Everything Shop'

## S. Phila. Agency Finds Answers to Almost Everything

By HOAG LEVINS  
Of The Inquirer Staff

It was becoming evident to Stan Pokras that finding a Philadelphia masseur who specified in peanut oil treatments was no easy thing.

The 23-year-old pushed himself back in the chair behind his cluttered desk and signed. "We get some strange requests, but we try to do our best with each one. This one will be a little difficult," said the gentle-spoken man from behind a fuzzy goatee.

#### OFFER SERVICES

Strange requests are a normal part of every day for Pokras, a former electronics technician who gave it all up to run "Everything for Everybody" out of a remarkable storefront just off Fifth and South sts.

EFE can probably be best described as a local people-to-people communications network which attempts to provide just what its name implies.

Open since June 1, the agency at 503 South st. now has 130 members who offer services in everything from German translation to flute lessons and commune accommodations to companions for blind and crippled persons.

#### USE OF RESOURCES

Members pay a \$15 fee and are then entitled to unlimited use of the agency's resources.

"What it really boils down to being, is an information center," explained Pokras who graduated from Olney High and spent 4½ years studying electronic engineering at the Drexel Institute of Technology.

"Today, there is no place for people to go who need things. Say an old lady is sick and needs someone to go to the supermarket. . . . She doesn't have much money. . . . Where can she go? Now she calls us and we put her onto someone who is involved with a shopping service."

#### RARE DISEASE

Or for instance, when a man needs a peanut oil massage three times a week. The man with that problem is suffering from a rare and fatal muscular disease that can be eased with the massages. He had nowhere to go, so he called EFE.

The idea of EFE — a loosely knit community of people all available to each other with some different skill or need — is not really new.

The original organization of that name was formed in New York City some four years

ago and its members there now number in the thousands.

"The Philadelphia chapter idea came about after I left school and was working as an electronics technician at Woman's Medical College," explained Pokras. I realized I really wanted to work with people, not electronics. I went to New York to see how EFE was run and it turned me on."

A steady stream of people wander in and out of the dingy storefront daily to see Pokras for advice, jobs, or just talk. One man came in and needed a job to pick up a few dollars. He was promptly directed down the street where a woman had offered \$10 to anyone who would help her pack antiques.

#### HOME-COOKED MEALS

The door had just closed when it opened again, this time with a chunky young woman who filled out card offering custom home-cooked meals to anyone who wanted them. She was offering a choice of Greek, Jewish or American foods and her prices per meal began at \$1.50.

Meanwhile two others came in, threw themselves comfortably into dilapidated stuffed chairs, and chewed on free bananas from a nearby table.

"It's amazing how people just want to get together, want to help each other. Every day, I meet more and more people who just want to communicate with other people," said Pokras.

#### ALL SORTS OF PEOPLE

"We're dealing with young people, and old people, long hairs and straights and it's incredible how well they really can get along when they relate to each other simply as people who need something or have something to offer."

The phone rang and Pokras slipped across the room, spoke quietly for a few moments, hung up and came back smiling. "That was a strange guy who is offering \$100 for someone to write him dirty stories. We get a lot of weird sex calls."

And minutes later, the next visitor wandered in. A young man with shoulder-length hair, smiled, and walked to the bulletin board where he read the small job cards. He began to peel a banana as he read. On the floor, a tiny grey kitten licked at his bare toes.

Over at the desk Pokras is back on the phone with a member who wants to know where to locate a certain kind of whale's teeth, at a reasonable price.