

10,000 Maniacs Fans Get Wrong Number

By RORY B. POLLARO

A Jamestown woman may feel a bit like a celebrity herself thanks to sharing her last name with a budding pop music star.

Eunice Merchant of Barrows Street said she has received telephone calls from 10,000 Maniacs fans in New York City and Boston asking her if Natalie is home.

Natalie is Natalie Merchant, the band's lead singer and one of the group's biggest stars. Mrs.

Merchant received the first telephone call for Natalie a few months ago and said it came as a surprise.

Three or four girls called from New York and wanted to know how to reach the band.

"They asked for Natalie and I asked, 'Natalie who?' They said, 'Merchant,' and it finally dawned on me," Mrs. Merchant said. She said she told the girls she doubts they can just call the 10,000 Maniacs on the telephone.

"The girls did not seem too concerned about the phone bill and we talked for quite a while," she said.

One of the girls who called Mrs. Merchant also lives on the fringes of fame. J.J. Philbin is the daughter of Regis Philbin, a New York City television celebrity.

"They were really sweet. A few weeks ago they called me back. They asked me did I know where WCA was and did I know where Fredonia was, that kind of stuff," Mrs. Merchant said. She said it was then that she found out who J.J. Philbin is.

"Then I got all excited. I asked, 'Is he really your father? You're not putting me on'." She said the girls assured her they were telling the truth.

"I think this is really good for Jamestown. The 10,000 Maniacs are representing Jamestown and I think it is great," Mrs. Merchant said. She said she thinks the band is helping Jamestown's image.

Getting some autographed photographs for the girls is Mrs. Merchant's goal. She said she hopes someone from the 10,000 Maniacs will hear about the girls and reach out with some autographs or a fan

club address.

"If I could just get them some way to get ahold of the 10,000 Maniacs and get them an autograph. They would go bananas," Mrs. Merchant said. She said the girls were calling all 10 Merchants listed in the Jamestown telephone book in hopes of reaching the band.

"I don't know how to go about it. I'd love to be able to get ahold of her or get an address where they can write for autographed pictures and that sort of stuff," she said.

Mrs. Merchant said this is as close as she wants to get to musical stardom.

"It's no big thing because you don't pick what your name is going to be," she told *The Post-Journal*. "I guess I'd rather get calls for Natalie Merchant than for Lee Harvey Oswald."

While Mrs. Merchant listens to some rock and pop music, she said she is not a 10,000 Maniacs fan.

"I knew they were going to be on Johnny Carson so I stayed up late," she said. "I wasn't impressed with them. I just didn't care for them, but they do have a few songs that I really do like."

The band's manager, Peter Leek,

told *The Post-Journal* he is sure the band appreciates the following it has and that Maniacs fans are among the most dedicated in music.

"The Maniacs' fans are really rabid fans. They're really into details," Leek said.

"We've had a lot of people call here and ask if Natalie is in. Fans call from all over and try to get to talk with her," he said.

The band enjoys returning to Jamestown, Leek said, because the members can relax without being mobbed by fans. Leek said the band is very proud of Jamestown and refers to the city in some of its lyrics.

The 10,000 Maniacs currently are on tour in England and will return to this country for a tour from June 13 to mid-September, including a July 1 date at Darien Lake near Buffalo. After the U.S. tour, the band will tour Europe, Japan and Australia, Leek said.

The group's newest album debuted at No. 18 on the European pop charts and is 68th in the United States, the highest debut album on the charts, Leek said.

The band will be on the *Tonight Show* June 5, Leek said.



EUNICE MERCHANT