



Dial - Log



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Jody Georgeson, EDITOR

Executive Director's Report

By Herb Hackenburg

Pamela Walker-Laird, adjunct associate professor - U. S. Social and Intellectual History, University of Colorado - Denver, was recently elected to the THG Board of Directors. Currently she's on a year-long sabbatical. She's doing research work at the Smithsonian and writing a book under contract to Harvard University's Cambridge Press. She spent her "vacation" here in Denver in August and after she returns from her sabbatical and publishes her book, Pam promises to work on a perfect attendance record at the THG board meetings. Last month Pam was the guest of honor at a "get acquainted lunch" with **Jim O'Boyle, Larry DeMuth, Howard Doerr, Joel Barker** and **myself**. Everyone felt it was a satisfactory and rewarding lunch.

A direct result of Pam's input was a presentation to the THG Board by **Ellen Fisher** of the Gates Foundation. Ms. Fisher discussed fundraising opportunities.

(We will publish a complete list of Directors after the annual meeting is held - probably in December.)

Oral History Program - Another topic Dr. Walker-Laird discussed at length and with passion was THG starting a serious oral history program. Every oral history program, by its nature, faces finite resources. This is especially true in the rapidly changing world of telecommunications. The THG Oral History Project has been on a sabbatical for a number of years. With Pam's encouragement, I believe THG will crank it up again.

At Jim O'Boyle's suggestion I arranged an oral history interview with **Warren Sackman** on Sept. 6. "Sack" lives in Denver, and spent more than 40 years with the Bell System. He was the manager in Wendover, Utah, during WWII and became friends with the pilot of the Enola Gay who was training there. Sack is a natural story-teller, and has had several adventures in his Bell career - we've got many of them on tape.

I've recently talked to **Fred Jacobs** (former Mountain Bell VP of Operations) who is very anxious to take part in our oral history project. Other immediate THG oral history targets include most members of the THG board along with **Richard McCormick** and **Jack MacAllister**. It's been suggested that I be interviewed (Jody and I could interview each other), and **Robert K.**

Timothy has volunteered to approach **Charlie Brown** about doing an interview. All have much to tell, nearly all are local and a series of such interviews will make a powerful restart of the THG Oral History Project. If you would be interested in assisting in the



project, or would like to nominate someone to be interviewed, please call us.

New Acquisition – Mr. Timothy recently donated a museum-quality, framed collection of special stock certificates to THG: a 100 share Mountain States certificate owned by RKT and signed by RKT (an extremely rare MST&T founder's certificate); a rare Tri-State Telephone Co. certificate owned and signed by Edward Bell Field who was the last president of the Colorado Telephone Co., the first president of Mountain States and the only president of Tri-State); a Colorado Telephone Co. certificate owned by the Boettcher family and signed by E. B. Field (the certificate contains revenue stamps themselves worth over a \$100 by stamp collectors); and a first issue Rocky Mountain Telephone Co. certificate owned by Theodore Vail.

The 2001 Campaign – The 2001 THG Campaign, chaired by **Mary Riffle**, promises to be the largest and most successful in THG history thanks to **Cary Macdonald** and Mary. Our mailing will grow from 1,000 to 48,000. Postage costs to THG will be about the same as they were last year. There will be two versions of the campaign letters, one will be targeted to Mountain Bell folks, the other will be target to Northwestern Bell folks. **Bob Timothy** will sign the Mountain Bell letter and the

professionally designed insert featuring a Colorado Telephone Co. stock certificate will be included; **Jack MacAllister** will sign the Northwestern Bell letter and the professionally designed insert will feature a NWB stock certificate. All inserts, letters and envelopes have been printed. The letters and inserts have been folded. Telephone Pioneers and our volunteers will stuff the envelopes and the mailings will go to individual states on a monthly basis.

Pioneer Assembly in Chicago – Per a suggestion by the THG board at the last meeting, volunteer **Curt Furness** and I will be attending our display at the 2001 National Telephone Pioneer Assembly in Chicago during the last week of this month (Sept. 27-29 – we'll actually be gone out from Sept. 25 to Oct. 1). We'll take and set up our own display and Curt and I will attend it. We'll attract Pioneer attendees with our display of old telephones, tell them our story, attempt to get them on our mailing list, and give them information about who we are and what we do.



Editor's Note: Be sure to check out the Telephone Pioneers of America web site at <http://www.telephone-pioneers.org/>

On our return trip we plan to stop in Rock Island, Ill., and fill up our rental van with hundreds of pieces of antique telephone equipment which have been donated to us by **James R. Sampson**. (An article by Mr. Sampson appeared in our last issue.)

Talking to Reporters –



I had a lengthy interview with a reporter from the *Dallas Daily News*. While I haven't seen it, the resulting story must have been interesting, because columnists from two other newspapers

interviewed me about additional material concerning telephone history. One of the columnists was from the big daily in San Antonio, so I said nice things about the new SBC archive in that city. I can't remember the other columnist, but she was from a small newspaper in Texas.

Interesting use of the archive - THG is "hosted" a three-person legal team from a company in a for copyright infringement suit. The team is spending the time with our directory collection finding *each* infringement, in *each* book published for the past five years. In this case, the team brought in their own copy machine and works under the eye of a security guard hired by Qwest Dex. Jody and I cobbled together a contract for the legal team to sign calling for them to pay THG, according to our published fee schedule, for the use of our directory collection and facilities, and for any damage to our directories.

Building tour - I had the honor of taking **Fred Jacobs** and **Hobe Corning** on a tour of the 931 14th Street Building a couple of weeks ago. Fred was V.P. – Operations and Hobe A.V.P. – Plant Operations, for Mountain Bell. Neither had been in the building since their retirement. Hobe delivered a package of excellent and rare photographs of the building (interior and exterior), and of

Frederick H. Reid -- most of which are new additions to our collection. Both men appreciated the special care U S WEST had taken in its massive remodeling and modernization of the building and the history oriented redecorating done by the current residents of the 14th floor. As previously mentioned, Fred also expressed a serious interest in taking part in our oral history program.

THG was a DSL outage victim - Our Qwest DSL service was out for a week, depriving us of e-mail and Internet service. **Jerry Wild** spent hours trying to get the thing to work, but it didn't happen. Jody took over, spending 2 to 3 hours every morning working with the Qwest tech.s trying to find and fix our problem. Jody says, while the tech.s were friendly and available, they had problems returning calls and their initial work seemed to be aimed at blaming THG equipment for the problem. This method didn't work with Jerry or Jody.



The week ended with THG having no e-mail or AOL on Friday night. The next Monday morning everything was working perfectly. There was a small news item about Qwest having problems with its DSL service. Qwest is giving us credit for the week we had no service. (*Qwest has announced that it will not give refunds to customers affected by the Code Red Worm - not, apparently, our problem.*)

Contest Results

We had many responses to last issue's question. **Gil Strakey**, of Littleton, Colorado, was the first to send in the correct answer, and he even named it in Western Electric-ese -- "Dresser, Cable, Wood." He went on to tell us, "It is used to dress up the lead sheath of cable and to beat in the ends of a lead sleeve to enclose a splice in lead-sheathed cable. The Dresser . . . was obtained from the Western Electric warehouse when they closed down shortly before the day Ma Bell died, 12/31/83. **Ken Clymer** and I got one at the same time." (*The one we have at THG belonged to Ken.*)

Gil also enclosed this picture of his line crew in Telluride, 1952.



Bill Beetum (Lineman), Stan Sutherland (Foreman), Frank Finnegan (Lineman /Driver), Jerry Yelton (Lineman) and Gil Strakey (Lineman)

Gil writes, "A bit about the picture and location. We were a 5 man un-located line crew reporting to Denver Construction. Districts did not exist then. The picture was taken near Telluride, CO during the winter of 1952.

Our truck is a 1947 White, Bell System Green color with a T type derrick, a headache bar, a winch, a pole pulling pulley, and a gasoline operated heater for us in the covered back.

We didn't use it much because the fumes were terrible and would make

us ill. And of course the hand digging tools - a spoon, a banjo, a 5 foot shovel and a 9 ft. steel digging bar. Also all tools and supplies necessary for working open wire lines.

Our job in Telluride consisted of rerouting a 3 arm line from the top of Keystone Hill into the central office within Telluride. The reroute was necessary to make way for a new road. Since all 5 ft. pole holes were dug by hand and the wire was pulled in by hand, our time there was 4 winter months. Oh yes, we hired a horse to pull poles and wire thru the snow and up the banks.

Our line crew would move from town to town on the western slope of Colorado, doing jobs drawn by local managers and toll pole replacement jobs where necessary. And in a lot of cases, trimming trees out of the lines and doing other maintenance work.

I am the only living member of the crew."

Carl Strasser (Davenport, Iowa) and **Don Stockton** (Fargo, North Dakota) told us that splicers called it a "beaten-in stick". According to Don, it was made from the very heavy, dense wood of the *lignum vitae* ("wood of life") tree which grows in Central and South America.

Other readers who answered correctly were **Bob Cleland**, **Bill Himmelman**, **John Krueger**, **Charlie Wright**, **Don Marek**, **Jim Ada**, **Russell Wassen**, **John Krueger** and **Jim Johnson**, who said that its nickname was "the wife beater." (Not very politically correct, Jim!)

Acquisitions

Thanks to **Louise Schroer** and **Betsy Maddux**, our collection of Pioneer materials continues to grow.

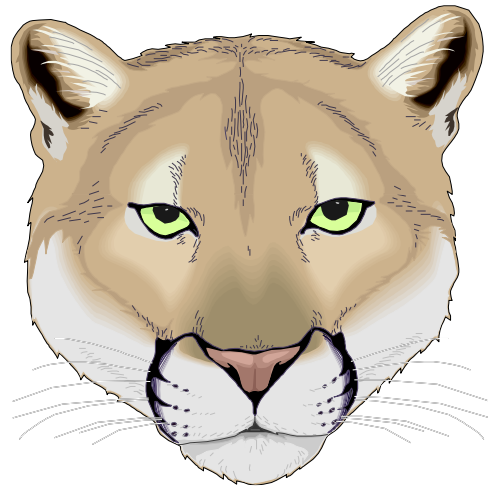
Louise continues to find wonderful items for the archive – this time in her own basement. In this batch – among other items - we found the record of a Pioneer project to restore the chairs at the Central City Opera House. There is a collection of items about the 1977 crash of the Mountain Bell corporate jet, and a Pioneers phonograph record of “In His Tradition” & “A Tradition of Caring”. She also sent two sets of glasses, embossed with pictures of antique phones and equipment. The **Gerald I. Maddux** collection contains many fine examples of Pioneer clothing and memorabilia.

Kent McAlister donated a complete baseball uniform, worn by him when he played for the Western Electric BTMEA team from 1969-1972. The initials stand for “Bell Telephone Male Employees Association”. Kent pitched and played 2nd base.

We haven’t finished accessioning John Herbolich’s donation, but among other treasures, it includes a 1927 edition of the *Overhead Systems Reference Book*, (also known as “the lineman’s bible”); *The Collected Papers of George Ashley Campbell*, an early research engineer at AT&T; and (*my personal favorite*) a brand-new, never-used Snuffador ®!

In Memory

We are sorry to report that our good friend **Mike Flavin** passed away in June. Mike was a charter member of the THG Board of Directors. Additionally, he volunteered as our data-base manager. Most of all, we just liked spending time with Mike. His gentle humor and hard work will be missed by all of us here at the History Group.



Ol’ 3 Toes

The following was taken from “The Legends of Trask Mountain” by Charles E. Seavy. It first appeared in the July-August 1951 edition of the Pacific Telephone Magazine.

To many old-time telephone men of the Pacific Northwest, the name Trask Mountain recalls memories of long miles of walking over steep trails, through driving rain storms or raging blizzards, hours of being soaked to the skin, half frozen and numbed by cold, days of back-breaking toil with inadequate equipment and under the most hazardous working conditions.

Ask one of them about it. Then after an explosive outburst, he will swell with pride as he tells you of the many times he was snowbound in one of the shelter cabins. About the falling snag that missed him by inches, or of his narrow escape from a forest fire. Chances are, he will conclude by once more emphatically reassuring you, “There ain’t money enough in this world to ever get me back on that hump!” But, when the call goes out, “There’s a ‘total’ on Trask Mountain”, he will be chafing at the bit wantin’ to go again.....

Ol' 3 Toes Point was the favorite rendezvous of a great cougar that once roamed this forest. His right front paw had been injured, possibly in a trap, so there was no doubt that Ol' 3 Toes had been around when one came upon three perfect paw marks, the one that was only half a paw. This wily old cat was endowed with a playful nature and developed an extremely annoying habit of following linemen on their way to the scene of a line break. There is no account of his ever having molested anyone, but to unexpectedly see his large greenish eyes, staring at you out of the darkness, would dampen the spirit, even if you are the most stout-hearted.

Old Trask Mountain, with its violent storms, and its many legends still stands as a challenge to those who have inherited the traditions of our business: "The Spirit of Service" and "The Message Must Go Through."

Letters

*We continue to learn from our members. The following letter from **John Stambaugh**, SBC historian, concerns an article in the last issue.*

Dear Herb,
Regarding "El Paso History" in the recent issue of your newsletter . . . you might want to correct some inaccuracies –

- o "In 1897, Southwestern Bell Telegraph and Telephone bought out the Erie Company." Actually it was the Southwestern Telegraph and Telephone Company (no Bell in the name). (*Mr. Stambaugh also believes it was well before 1897*)
- o . . . I feel that it was more of a "take back" than a "buy out", although I can't say this for certain. But, whichever it was, it wasn't the Erie

Company that it "bought out". The Erie company was a holding company in Lowell, Massachusetts .

- o Southwestern wasn't acquired by Tri-State. Only its El Paso exchange was.

Tri-State, incidentally, had several exchanges in Texas besides El Paso, Ysleta, and Clint.

Sincerely,

John Stambaugh

Man's Best Friend

According to the London Times, Japanese engineers are designing mobile phones for animals. After attaching the device to a pet's collar, absent owners can call to reassure their furry loved ones. The companies hope to develop a new customer base in the soon-to-be saturated market.

The article did not mention if waterproof phones with tiny harnesses are being developed for piscine pets.

Telephone history disaster - up close and personal

By Herb Hackenburg

While Americans were going through hell in New York City and Washington DC, the Telecommunications History Group was holding a board meeting in the board room on the 14th floor of the Mountain Bell Headquarters Building on September 11, 2001.

Soren Black-Petersen, director of The Telephone Museum located in Hellerup, Denmark, spoke at the meeting. In his discussion with the THG board, Soren detailed the personal hell he has gone through in heading a

museum soon to be closed by the telephone company that now owns it.

Two decades ago, Soren was a world-class collector of antique European telephones. Soren's collection was so comprehensive and well maintained; people began to want to see it. Soren opened a private museum in his house. The senior managers of the Copenhagen Telephone Company heard about Soren's collection and offered to provide him with space in an old traffic office and financial aid if he'd put his full collection on display and open a real museum.

Thus, Soren began his career as a museum director. When it came time to install new dial equipment in the traffic office, Soren talked the company into leaving the old cord boards in place and working. These spectacular switchboards became the center display of the museum. By the way, these extremely rare switchboards were manufactured by a European division of Western Electric.

For more than a decade Soren's museum grew in popularity and new displays were constantly added. The things changed.

First, the four small phone companies that did all the business in Denmark were combined into TeleDenmark. Other than some additional red-tape Soren had to go through to get his bills paid, this change didn't bother the museum's operations that much.

Then, Ameritech purchased TeleDenmark. Ameritech had a full-time archivist on its staff and operated a museum in Chicago, so Ameritech didn't change operations at Soren's museum at all.

But then Ameritech was purchased by SBC. As it had done indirectly at

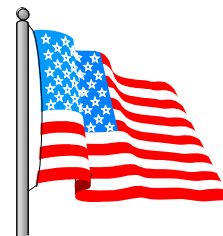
Southern New England Telephone, and directly at Pacific Telesis and Ameritech, SBC* began procedures to close down operations at Soren's museum. Since over the years Soren had been able to set some special rules in place, he was legally able to stop SBC's action. But Soren paid a heavy price. His financial support began to disappear and what support there was began to arrive in his bank account sporadically. He faced more and more red tape. The company then demanded the space his museum was located in. Finally Soren was presented a retirement and benefits package he couldn't refuse.

Hence, after Soren returns from his month-long trip across the United States, he will retire and his handsome museum will be closed. Most of the exhibits will be boxed and put away. The beautiful working switchboard will be torn down with a couple of non-working sections being displayed in Denmark's national museum.

The Telecommunications History Group's **major** goal is not to let this story happen in Denver.

(The museum's web page address is: www.telefonmuseet.dk/uk/)

*Yes, we know SBC changed its method of operations in this country and has opened a giant, professional archive operation in Texas, but operations in Denmark were excluded.



We wish you peace.