



# Dial - Log



Published by the  
Telecommunications History Group, Inc.

---

(303) 296-1221

DENVER, COLORADO

www.telcomhistory.org

---

Autumn 2003, Vol. 7, No. 3

Jody Georgeson, EDITOR

## Director's Report

By Herb Hackenburg

**Thank you AUSWR** - We have already reaped a large measure of benefits from the article about the Telecommunications History Group in a recent issue of the Association of U S West Retirees (AUSWR) newsletter. Because of the article - which editor **Hazel Floyd** was kind enough to publish - AUSWR members have contributed several collections to our archives. (*For more about AUSWR, see the article on page 6*).

**Thank you Shirley, Jerome and "Anon."** - Three specific collections come to mind.

*The Ernest Opdahl Collection*, sent to us by his daughter, **Shirley Opdahl Zimmerman**. (*See more about this collection in the article about "Phone Families". page 5.*)

*The Jerome J. Urban Collection* Jerry is from Omaha and was an installer for coin and business when he was with NWB. This may be one of the most complete and well documented collections THG has ever received. (Excuse me, please.) - - -

(I'm back.) As I was writing about the Urban Collection, a fourth box arrived at my desk and **Carol Baird** and I had to open it. Just like the other three boxes, it was packed with neatly labeled telephone company goodies. The most valuable items in the collection are a vast assortment of Bell System tools, many brand new. Other items include 105 key chains from AT&T, NWB, USW, Bell South, New England Telephone, Southern Bell, Bell Tri-Co Services, Yellow Pages, CWA, Spurs West, MB/NWB/PNB Public Communications and the Bell Federal Credit Union. We also now have the very rare Trimline® (dial) brown and rust colored key chains and we filled in some missing colors of our Princess® Phone key chains. Thanks to this collection we now have four different NWB coffee cups where we had one before.

*An anonymous collection* from a retiree in Western Colorado who worked for Mountain Bell Public Telephone (coin). (*Sometimes our most generous donors prefer not to have their name used, and we honor all such requests.*)

He sent us three relatively old phones, circa 1930-1950, which included a Stromberg Carlson desk magneto phone. The best of this collection is a circa 1960 three-slot coin phone complete and in working condition. Believe it or not our archives did not have a single 3-slot coin phone in its collection. Now, thanks to our anonymous benefactor, we have one.

**Thank you Georg** - Many times when you do someone a favor it benefits you two times over. That's what happened with **Georg Ek**. Georg is one of our early volunteers who retired as a volunteer, but he still keeps in touch. Georg is also one of the world's top experts on antique Ericsson telephone equipment.

A few years ago, THG received an antique Ericsson intercom instrument. It featured a superb bronze casting of a lady holding an Ericsson receiver at her ear and these instructions in English: *Place telephone as above and give the*



*office your order.* Georg was fascinated with the charming little instrument. He checked his reference material and with the Ericsson Company, but found nothing about the phone.

Georg surmised that the Ericsson Chicago works built the phone (made to operate out of a standard American electric, single-switch switchbox) at a time when not very many Americans knew much about telephones. Anyway, when he retired as a volunteer, Georg asked if he

could borrow the little phone so he could build a duplicate. Considering all the work and expertise he had contributed to THG, we allowed him to borrow the "bronze lady."

It took over a year, but a few weeks ago Georg brought the lady back home. He showed the staff all the hand-machined parts for the duplicate lady, including a new bronze faceplate.

Georg's copy had a clear plastic box for the original's steel electrical switchbox-sized switch-hook housing and faceplate mounting. "That's so you can see how the switch-hook operates," according to Georg.

The best part is that Georg supplied a missing bronze screw and rubber grommet on the original, and replaced the modern replica mouthpiece and cord with an authentic Ericsson mouthpiece and braided cord. He also securely remounted the now completely restored little phone in its place at the archives.



**Thank you Jeff** - In our never-ending search to be and look more professional, we have hired a professional webmaster, **Jeff Georgeson**, to upgrade the THG web site. Beginning in early October, you can gain a firsthand view of Jeff's considerable contributions by punching

up [www.telcomhistory.org](http://www.telcomhistory.org) on the Internet.

Actually, it will help THG and Jeff if you readers share your thoughts and ideas about the web site with us. Our phone number is 303-296-1221, our e-mail is [telcomhist@aol.com](mailto:telcomhist@aol.com), our fax number is 303-296-0282, and our mailing address is on this newsletter.



**Thank you THG staff and volunteers** - There's some irony in all of the work being accomplished by the THG volunteers and staff over the past several months. In this outfit's beginnings in the early 1990s, we had more than 50 tons of raw material to process into the archives. This included hundreds of pieces of hardware such as telephones, tools, switchboards and insulators; 25 tons of manuscript material; hundreds of historic telephone books; 4.7 tons of Bell System BSPs; 75,000 historic photographs; more than 6,000 video tapes; 600,000 historic telephone company stock certificates; and a bunch of other stuff.

Now, thirteen years later, the volunteers have nearly processed all of the original manuscript material and made a good start on the photographs. The BSPs and directories are fully shelved and available (directories are in the database and the BSPs are fully indexed); and much of the hardware is inventoried and tagged.

The staff, in addition to its normal duties, has been doing some reorganizing, house cleaning and redecorating. The redecorating is really making the old place look good. In spite of the reorganization, the addition of efficient shelving and the housecleaning,

we still have new collections sitting all over the office and we're running out of room to place them once they have been processed.

I think this is a good sign. It's a sign of life for archives to have of constant supply of "new old stuff" flowing in and to have an ever-increasing demand from old and new customers for research.

## The Museum of Communications

By Don Ostrand

*Editors Note: Don is Director of the Museum of Communications in Seattle, WA. This is the first in a series of articles by Don.*

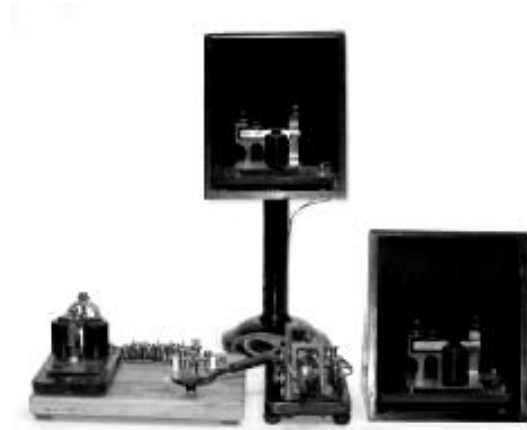


*An exhibit at  
The Museum of Communications*

Two innovations that have had a major impact on the world we live in are the airplane and the telephone. Both are worthy of historic preservation. In Seattle, Washington, that is exactly what is happening.

The Museum of Flight and the Museum of Communications, just one and one-half miles apart on East

Marginal Way South, tell the stories of the two industries. Our industry is well represented by the Museum of Communications.



*Telegraph keys and sounders at The Museum of Communications*

With the state-of-the-art telecommunications technology boom came what was possibly the final opportunity to capture a major part of our communications heritage. Our heritage is illustrated by the technology that was being upgraded or replaced in the 1980's and 1990's. Things like manual farmer-line crank phones, operator switchboards, electro-mechanical switching systems were all being replaced by high-speed digital technology and digital data transmission.

Likewise, earlier forms of communications - key and sounder circuits, Teletype machines, huge early data sets, desk faxes, and electro-writers - had been or were soon to be phased out. Long-haul transmission equipment, N-carrier, O-carrier, L-carrier, 1000/20~signaling circuits, SF (single frequency) signaling, 4-wire voice transmission circuits, program amplifiers, and co-axial cable would soon be gone.

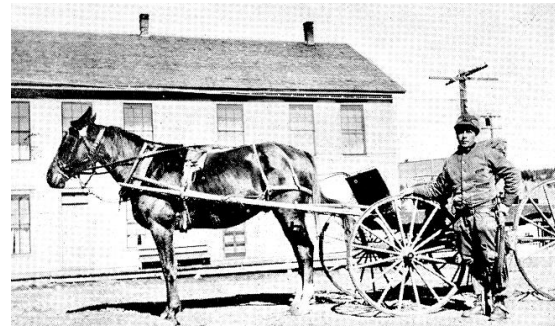
The programmed demise of the things that built our communications network prompted museum founder

**Herbert Warrick** to seek approval from the Pacific Northwest Bell officers to build a telephony museum.

With corporate approval of the project, a team was developed (in 1985) between PNB, Western Electric and the Telephone Pioneers of America to build a world-class museum. The Vintage Telephone Equipment Museum was born. (In 2002, the museum became an affiliated with the Telecommunications History Group and changed its name to The Museum of Communications.)

The museum houses a wide variety of vintage telephone equipment, all restored to operational status, which is routinely demonstrated for our visitors. And the work goes on.

*Take a step back into telecommunications history by visiting the museum in person [call 206-767-3012 for a tour] or at our web-site -- [www.museumofcommunications.org](http://www.museumofcommunications.org).*



*Old Bob & one of his drivers*

## **Bob**

by J. L. Patterson

*This article appeared in The Mountain States Monitor, September 1921.*

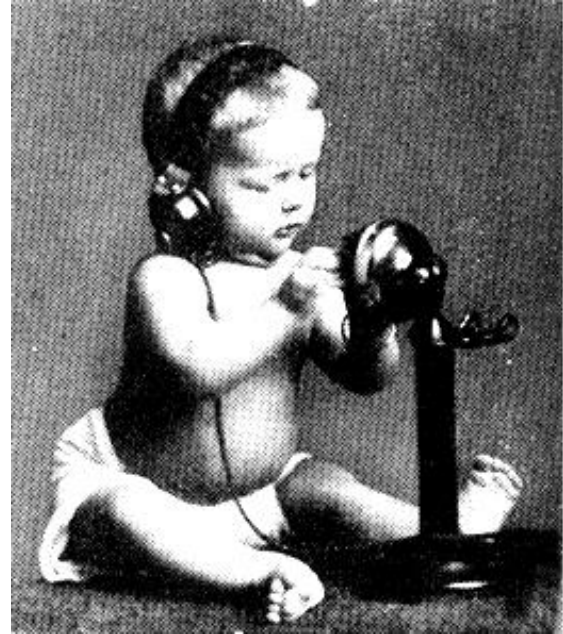
He's only a horse - a "has-been" at that, but say, what a record he has. If you have worked in the Boulder district during the past twelve years and have not heard of Bob -- well, you've just

missed being acquainted with one of the best servants our company ever had the privilege of engaging. I say engaging, for the horse's feed and care is equivalent to a wage, and in the case of a good horse, who faithfully performs his work, may justly be considered as such.

I first made Bob's acquaintance some ten years ago when he was working with a mate called Gyp. The two were splendidly matched, full of life and play, always ready to go, and whatever their faults, were true blue to each other and to their work. Gyp held out for several years, and then she commenced to cough; the lovely bay of her coat began to fade, . . . her eyes lost their sparkle, and one day a big rangy hose called Sport was put with Bob in her stead. Bob lived on, and tho he was handicapped by the awkwardness of his new mate, he still did his best. He had many mates after that . . . but none that filled the bill so well as Gyp.

It is one thing to be a horse, and another to be a popular horse. Bob was such a one, as the men whom he has so faithfully served will testify. Many . . . who have trusted to Bob's never failing service to carry them safely thru a blinding storm or over a bit of road where a misstep meant destruction; and who have relied on him when only Bob could win the day, know full well the value of his service . . . Bob has, without a doubt, "shot" more trouble than any other one horse.

Indeed, all the boys loved old Bob . . . if there is a heaven for horses, and if service counts in the entrance requirements, Bob will surely be there.



## Phone Families

by Herb Hackenburg

Many of our members remember knowing a fellow telephone employee who was a member of a "telephone family." Nearly always the memories of that phone family employee were pleasant. As a rule, members of a "telephone family" were good, respectable, hardworking folks.

I remember the Hills, a Mountain Bell family from Montana. **Carl Hill, Sr.** began as a plant clerk with the Rocky Mountain Bell Telephone Company in Billings in 1906. The young clerk witnessed a plant foreman cutting new copper wire into three-foot pieces and then selling them for scrap and pocketing the proceeds. He also witnessed other swindles going on.

Under Theodore Vail's orders, the well-run Colorado Telephone Company purchased Rocky Mountain to form a new company, Mountain States Telephone & Telegraph. Vail had heard about some of the things going on in the Rocky Mountain company, so Colorado

Telephone Company (now Mountain Bell) auditors were dispatched to personally check things out in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming and Utah. A couple of years and several firings later the auditors found their way to Billings.

On the day the auditors from Denver were to arrive at the train station in Billings, Plant Clerk Carl Hill showed up for work at an empty Plant office. All the bosses had hightailed out of town.

He may have been a shave-tail clerk, but Carl Hill was no dummy. He quickly made out a promotion slip (which was part of his job) naming himself as the new wire chief in Helena, scribbled a signature, took the buggy to the traffic office, picked up the young chief operator and the two sped off to Helena where they got married. The marriage produced three sons, all of whom had long and distinguished careers at the phone company. **Carl Hill, Jr.** was an assistant vice president for Corporate Human Resources in Denver when he retired.

What brought this story to mind was a wonderful gift from the family of **Ernest Opdahl**, who retired with more than 42 years with Northwestern Bell. According to **Shirley Opdahl Zimmerman** of West Des Moines, her dad retired from NWB in 1972 with more than 42 years of service. Ernest passed away last September at the age of 92. This rightfully proud daughter sent her father's scrapbook to THG. The

scrapbook features the time Ernest was loaned to the New England Telephone Company to help restore service after the 1938 hurricane.

We at THG would like Shirley and the rest of our readers to know that personal scrapbooks are valuable and unique parts of the nation's history - and, in the case of telephone retiree scrapbooks, a unique part of telecom industry history.



*Left - "Mack & I (Opdahl) being supervised"  
Keene, NH 10-5-38*

We began this story about telephone families. Here's the next to last sentence in Shirley's note, "In our family there were six of us with a total of over 150 years of service, which made Dad very proud, and we had him to thank for getting us started."



## **THE ASSOCIATION OF U S WEST RETIREES (AUSWR)**

By Hazel Floyd

The Association of U S West Retirees (AUSWR) is the umbrella organization of six separate groups within the U S West area consisting of fourteen states. The umbrella organization was formed in August 1999. Some of the state groups date back to 1993.

At the present time, we represent over 21,000 members from the 14 states. Not all members are retirees of Mountain Bell, U S West, or Qwest. Long-term Qwest employees as well as AT&T, Lucent, Western Electric and other retirees have joined.

The purpose of the AUSWR is to protect and preserve the pensions and benefits promised to long-term employees, retirees, dependents and surviving spouses of members.

Our members have also joined with other retiree groups in the National Retiree Legislative Network (NRLN) of Washington, D.C. to monitor the proposed changes in Federal legislation which could affect their benefits in any way. All state groups also monitor State legislation concerning benefits.

AUSWR introduced two stockholder proxy proposals at the Qwest Annual Meeting in 2001. Both were reintroduced again at the 2002 Annual Meeting with a gain in shareholder votes. Three proxy proposals are prepared for the next Stockholder Meeting.

All elected board members and representatives are retirees, volunteering their time and efforts to help and guide members who have questions or problems regarding any benefits. Along those lines, AUSWR and Qwest have jointly developed the Retiree Advocacy Program in all states to handle contacts from members, dependents and surviving spouses concerning benefit issues with Qwest.

Members are kept informed through our quarterly newsletter, *The Guardian*, and, on urgent matters, through our e-mail network. The AUSWR web site (<http://www.uswestretiree.org>) is linked to other retiree and the NRLN web sites. For members who do not have access to

e-mail, other lines of communication are used.

We welcome any long-term employee or retiree to join the AUSWR. Yearly dues are only \$10.00. To join, just send this amount with your name and address to:

AUSWR  
P.O. Box 27027  
Denver, CO 80227

A copy of the latest newsletter will be mailed to you.

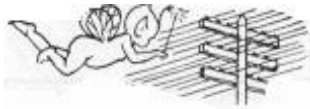


### **Contest!**

**Arthur Knief** of Scottsdale, Arizona recently donated a Bell System craft test set or "goat". Technicians used them to test analog telephone lines. The contest is to explain why they were called "goats." The best - and/or the funniest - answer will receive a fine prize.

Send your best answer via email to [telcomhist@aol.com](mailto:telcomhist@aol.com), via snail mail to PO Box 8719, Denver, CO 80202-8719 or call us at 303-296-1221.





## In Memoriam

**Jane Barbe**, whose voice was familiar to the millions, died July 18 in Roswell, GA. She was 74. Anyone who ever dialed a wrong number or had to "Please listen to the following options" in a voice-mail system, was probably prompted by her.

In 1963, Barbe began working for Audichron, the unit of Electronic Telecommunications that pioneered the time-weather phone message industry. Her friendly voice was heard an estimated 40 million times a day in the 1980s and early 1990s on everything from automated time and weather messages to hotel wake-up calls.

During her 40-year career she articulated immortal lines including "At the tone, the time will be 7:22 and 40 seconds," "I'm sorry, the number you have dialed is no longer in service" and "Please press seven for more options." She also recorded daily horoscopes and seasonal messages from Mrs. Claus. Her voice is still heard on thousands of companies' internal and customer contact voice mail systems.

Barbe did most of her recordings for Electronic Tele-communications Inc., in Atlanta and for Octel Communications, now part of Bell Labs/Lucent.

People wrote to her, some saying they called a certain number to hear her voice when they were lonely. When she appeared at conventions, hundreds of people would line up for her autograph.

"You hear my voice in more than 1,000 cities in the United States, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, South America, Canada. . . . Vocally, I get around," she once said.

## Avoid the Rush!

Herb's "Director's Report" tells about all the wonderful material our members and AUSWR members send us. Unfortunately, it costs money to properly care for these materials. In 2002, we spent over \$8,000 in archival supplies, alone. That doesn't include the time staff and volunteers put in inventorying, cleaning, repairing and organizing artifacts and documents.

You'll soon be receiving our annual request for donations. We realize that we are just one of many worthy causes, and that many of you are facing increasing costs and decreasing benefits. But if you think what we are doing is important and if you enjoy receiving the *Dial-Log*, please consider contributing something to the cause of preserving our common heritage.

No need to wait for the flyer - send your contribution now and avoid the rush!



*"Golden Boy" or the "Spirit of Communications"*



Telecommunications History Group  
P.O. Box 8719  
Denver, CO 80201-8719

