



# Dial - Log



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Jody Georgeson, EDITOR

## Director's Report

By Herb Hackenburg

I begin this report with mixed feelings. After serving as the "lead volunteer" and/or Executive Director of the Telecommunications History Group for nearly 14 years, I will step down as executive director at the end of this month.

As you know, my wife Margaret has Alzheimer's and that evil disease can only go one way, so I have to make sure I have the time available to devote to my care-giving duties. So far, Margaret has been a wonderful patient, which has allowed me to spend time at THG. As long as I can, I plan to hang around THG as a telephone historian, as a volunteer helping THG get into its exciting new "virtual mode", and whatever else I can do to help.

A new director will be announced soon.

**Volunteer Recruiting** -- We enclosed a special volunteer-recruiting issue of *Dial Log* in our 12-state membership mailing. To date, we've received one potential volunteer as a result. We conducted a special tour of 931 14<sup>th</sup> Street Building

and the archive for several CWA retirees, tried to recruit some volunteers from this group and received a couple of nibbles.

We are planning to collect potential volunteers from active Qwest employees during our Archives Month activities by hosting an all-day in the Archives Open House - that includes celebrating my 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday) - for employees. (*See page 6 for more information.*) We will also be conducting special employee tours of our museums during Archives Month and doing some more volunteer hunting.

Our archivist, **Jody Georgeson**, has taken the lead for Archives Month activities for the Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists (SRMA), which includes archivists from throughout Colorado and Wyoming. SRMA hadn't participated in Archive Month until this year.

**Fund raising** - We've reported on the results of our membership campaign elsewhere in the newsletter, but we've also been busy with other fundraising efforts:

### Federal grant

A few years ago, with the assistance of a respected Washington lobbyist (the son of a THG volunteer) and a member

of Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell's staff, we were able to get a small designated Federal grant for THG into the national budget. Unfortunately, we lost the grant just 30 minutes before the budget deadline. This year, our same volunteer "lobbyist" is the legislative liaison for a very high national office holder. Frankly, as they say in Washington, D.C., at this time our volunteer wields some hefty clout. Since THG is a non-controversial, non-profit outfit with a history of accomplishment, he's offered to take another crack at getting a federal grant for us.

Board Vice President **Mary Riffle** has reworked my original \$4.5 million proposal (centered around our virtual museum project) and I understand we now have a proposal. Our volunteer will hand carry it to his son when they meet next month for lunch at the White House.

#### Qwest Foundation

We have submitted a request for funding to the Qwest Foundation. This request is for general operating expense, only. We will seek project funding elsewhere (see above).

#### Stock certificate sales

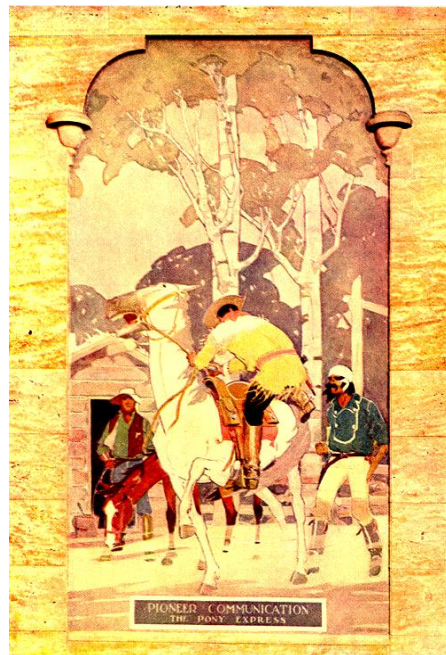
**Dr. Ron Pratt, Ken Pratt's** son, is a college professor in California and our volunteer insulator-expert when he visits Denver. He has volunteered to begin selling selected stock certificates on *E-Bay*. He has experience in this area. We've selected four certificates, set a minimum bid, and written some copy about them. So now we'll wait and see what develops.



**The virtual museum project** -- A lot of work has gone into a demonstration CD of what a proposed virtual museum will look like. As the demonstration will show, a lot of effort by the staff, volunteers, our webmaster and the board members on the Committee has already been invested in the Virtual Museum Project, which has a potential of such magnitude that I cannot yet even fully comprehend it.

Copies of this CD can now accompany our grant requests both here in Denver and Washington, D.C. The CD can also be sent across the nation to other telephone museums that we will invite to join the Virtual Museum consortium.

To me, the demonstration shows much more than our vision of a virtual museum. It shows that THG isn't just fooling around - we are serious and we are going to accomplish this Herculean task no matter what.



**Mural cleaning** -- We've joined Qwest in a relatively small project - the cleaning of the 13 Allen True murals in the 931

14<sup>th</sup> St. Building in Denver. The cost will be about \$140,000. THG will request a grant for half of this amount from the Colorado Historic Fund, and Qwest will provide, through us, \$70,000 in matching funds. This could be the first of several such arrangements.



Herb shows off "the Lucite Forest", 2003

**Wrap up --** In 1990, three “Five-plus-five” retirees and one 1987 retiree began the Telecommunications History Group. It really began with a two-page proposal I sent to **Jack MacAllister** on the day in 1989, that I submitted my retirement papers. The U S WEST President returned my proposal with the signed note, “Looks good. Do it.” It was in November of 1989, and I wasn’t yet officially retired, so I took the note to the PR Executive Director **Jack Sommars**. He gave me \$1,000 and arranged for office and storage space to start the project. Thus THG began at 931 14<sup>th</sup> Street on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor.

Within the year, we had collected 43 tons of historic material, not counting the 4.7 tons of BSPs or the historic telephone directory collection that we still hadn’t tracked down. The task had grown too big for four one-day-a-week volunteers.

We went to Mr. MacAllister for help. He directed us to **Howard Doerr**. With Howard’s leadership, in the next 90 minutes we had **Larry DeMuth** and **Bob**

**Runice** on board to be the first THG directors of a new Colorado nonprofit corporation's board. Before the day was over the rest of the board was recruited.

Today, THG occupies 6,000 square feet of floor space, not counting its three museums. We have processed more than 8,000 linear feet of documents; more than 3,000 historic telephone directories; a full set of BSPs; a relatively extensive telephone history research library (featuring several books from Alexander Graham Bell’s personal library); and the nation’s largest collection of historic telephone company stock certificates. We have an estimated 105,000 black-and-white photographs; thousands of negatives; over 5,000 videotapes; and hundreds of audiocassettes. We have additional historic material arriving nearly every week. We now operate the fourth largest archive in Colorado (and the largest independent telephone archive in the nation), two small museums in Denver and a very large museum in Seattle. We have more than two dozen dedicated volunteers, a professional staff of three, a hard-working board of directors, and a very strong vision of our future.

To me it has been a wonderful, thrilling and fulfilling 14 years, and like the proverbial bad penny, I hope to turn up and contribute what I’m able to for at least another 14 years.

**Thank you one and all.**

Archivists, who flash the torch  
Of Truth along Time's mould'ring  
records,  
Illuminating all the fading past,  
Like golden letters on an ancient  
scroll.

-Mrs. W.R. Wilde

*Thank you, Herb, for "flashing the  
torch of Truth"!*

## Western Regional Insulator Show

By Mike Green

*Editor's note: For more pictures of the show displays, see the NIA Web site at <http://home.earthlink.net/~n2glass/NIA2004.htm>*

The insulator-collecting hobby is thriving and could be seen in full swing recently in Denver. The National Insulator Association held its Western Regional Show on August 28th and 29th at the Denver Marriott Southeast at I-25 and Hampden. The National Insulator Association monitors and promotes the hobby to 5000 plus collectors across the country. The show was held in the 10,000 square foot grand ballroom and featured 95 sales tables with dealers from as far away as Alaska and Florida. Although the show was primarily insulators, there was also a strong contingent from the local bottle club and a few antique dealers as well.



*Snowcone*

The variety of sellers added to the public interest, and brought in over 600 people on Saturday alone. Sales were reported to be very brisk with a lot of insulators changing hands. Most sales were in the \$5.00 to \$50.00 price range but there were also a considerable number sold which cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars. Prices vary a great deal depending on the color, condition,

rarity, etc. of the insulator. One piece sold at the show for nearly \$10,000 because there are less than 10 known to exist.

Whatever the price range, there were lots of beautiful and unusual insulators to satisfy the collectors in attendance. In addition to the many dealer tables, there were also 20 display tables that featured many rare and unusual insulators.



One very special display was a group effort that invited collectors to bring "seldom seen" pieces together for one spectacular display. The end result exceeded expectations and included several one of a kind pieces rarely seen by the public. The combined value of the display was nearly a half a million dollars! Needless to say, there was tight security in and around the hall during the show.

Many of the other displays in the hall were just as spectacular and much more specialized. One collector from Texas had a display of threadless insulators that dated to the 1860's and earlier. "Threadless" is the term used for insulators that had a smooth pinhole before a molding process for threads had been invented. Threadless insulators came in many different styles and date back to the invention of the telegraph in the 1840's.

The invention of the telegraph and the locomotive did more to change our

world than any other 19th century inventions. Amazingly, there are two known examples of the original insulator used by Samuel Morse on his Baltimore to Washington D.C. test line in 1844.



Moving a little later into history, a collector from Alabama brought a display of "Bullet" style insulators from the 1870's to 1880's, and won the NIA best of show award for his combination of rare glass, history, and showmanship. One local junior collector put together a display that featured insulators with impurities in the glass such as wire, milk, amber, bubbles, and even a one-inch rock. Another collector from Montana put together a large and colorful display of power pieces.

There was definitely something for everyone who enjoys insulators and the history of communications in our country.



*Screwtop*

Shows the size of the Western Regional are held all over the country, with the largest being the annual National Show. This year's National was held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and next year's is already set for San Jose, California. Along with the national and regional shows, there are dozens of smaller shows all over the country.

In addition to shows, collectors also share the hobby through the Internet, friendly get-togethers, and the Crown Jewels of the Wire Insulator Magazine, which was founded in 1969.

Collecting insulators is a great hobby filled with history, color, and lots of great people. For more information please contact Mike Green at 303-763-9924 or [n2glass@earthlink.net](mailto:n2glass@earthlink.net). You can also visit the Western Regional Web site, which has links to many other sites, at: <http://home.earthlink.net/~n2glass/NIA2004.htm>



<http://ahc.uwyo.edu/srma/archivesmonth/>

## **The Museum of Communication**

By Don Ostrand

*Don is Director of the Museum of Communications in Seattle, WA. This is the fifth in a series of articles by Don.*



### **You hold a piece of the past... THG Celebrates Archives Month**

Archives Month is an annual, month-long observance of the importance of historical records to people's lives. During September and October, cultural institutions throughout Colorado and Wyoming will be holding special events in honor of our past.

This year, the theme is "History is a puzzle . . . You hold a piece of the past. In honor of Archives Month, THG is having the following events. WE hope you can join us!

*October 1 through October 31 -*  
Visit the exhibits in the lobbies of the 931 14th St. and 1005 17th St. buildings.

*October 14 -* Help Herb celebrate his 70th birthday! Birthday party, open house and guided tours of the Archives (see the events page for photos of the event).

Archives Month is sponsored by the Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists. For more information, a calendar of events, and a sample of the documents to be enjoyed, visit

With nearly 11,000 square feet of floor space to fill, our "procurement team" had tagged for delivery many items throughout the Pacific Northwest Bell territory. From the full-sized panel equipment frames (11'6" tall by 13' wide) to the smallest items of ephemera, the move was on.



*Cross-bar test panel*

The Western Electric Company's Installation Department made available to us all the specialized tools to handle and install the huge equipment. It should be noted that we are grateful for the many volunteers retired from Western Electric who have the expertise in all facets of equipment engineering and installation.

Sorting and staging these new arrivals into specified areas on the floor by equipment type allowed for an inventory and sequential selection for hoisting and placement per our frame layout plan.

The central office building bays required the initial superstructure to support the equipment frames. The Western Electric Company donated the material and a crew to install the ironwork grid superstructure. Once it was in place, our volunteers started to hoist and position the equipment. With the equipment erected and held in place with heavy straps, the floor was marked, drilled and anchors installed to secure each frame to the floor. The overhead hardware was installed to make permanent attachments to the superstructure and to replace the temporary straps.

With the objective of making each switching unit operational and as the frames were placed, we developed the ability to completely inventory the items we had and to develop a list of items we still needed. Our procurement team was back to work. The end result, as we can demonstrate, was a complete and restored equipment-working environment - just as it had served our customers over time.

Some of the little treasures, the ephemera, were also made ready for display. We were very fortunate to procure professional display shelving from closed "Phone Center Stores" that were disbanded due to the Bell System breakup. The display shelving was installed and a nice array of items was on display making it interesting for all visitors. (Unfortunately many items have "sprouted legs" and become AWOL from the museum.)

The major procurement took place over a two to three year timeframe. Even

today we still find "nice to have" items to expand the museum.



A couple of items that have eluded us are a Western Electric "Drop-side" toaster and a Blue 302 telephone set. If either is spotted or available please give us a call at 206-767-3012.

*In the next issue The Panel Story*

## **Membership Campaign**

The 2004 membership campaign is progressing apace. We sent out over 9,000 requests in August and have already received nearly \$15,000. A million thanks go to all of you who have contributed. And those of you who haven't, there's still time.

Your tax-deductible donation insures that you continue to receive the *Dial-Log* and - more importantly - it helps to protect and preserve the history of our industry. So get out those checkbooks!



*In America, anybody can be president.  
That's one of the risks you take.*

Adlai Stevenson, statesman (1900-1965)

## PHONESPELL

*Here's an interesting new service we found on the Internet. We quote from their site:*

The PhoneSpell® search engine provides 3 services in one! You may have heard that now you can take your phone number with you when you move. Enter a 6 to 10 digit phone number and we'll show you what words and phrases your phone number spells to help you decide if you want to keep it. Opening a business and need a new phone number? Pick a new 7 or 8 digit phone number by typing in an available exchange (first 3 to 5 digits) and see what one-word numbers you can choose from. Searching for just the right toll free number to advertise? Type in letters and it will show you the corresponding phone number.

- Enter a full phone number and see what words and phrases it spells, -or-
- Enter the start of a phone number and see what words start with those digits, -or-
- Enter some letters and see the corresponding phone number

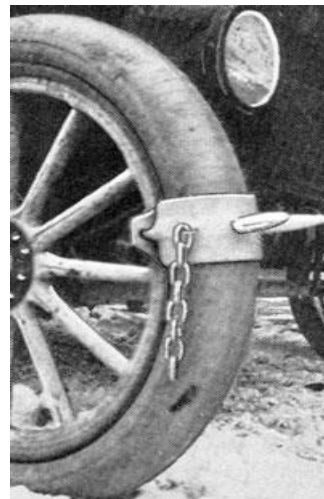
The PhoneSpell® mnemonic services are offered on the honor system. If you find the service of value, we ask you to pay what you think it is worth and help PhoneSpell® stay alive.

*When we tested the site, we found out that there are no words for the exchange "303" and that the rest of our number makes no sense, either. However, if we moved to Allentown, Pennsylvania, we could ask for 835-374-6637 -- or*

*"telephones". Check it out at <http://www.phonespell.org/>*

### The Original "Denver Boot"

*This device was invented for use by the automobile owner. A similar device, known as "The Denver Boot," is now used by police to disable cars whose owners have outstanding traffic tickets and/or arrest warrants. This article is taken from the February 1917 issue of the Mountain States Monitor.*



Mr. C.H. Edwards, commonly known as the "Millionaire Fitter," because he installs telephones with the aid of an automobile, recently obtained a patent on what he terms a "Safety Shackle."

As illustrated, the device consists of two sharp prongs mounted on a steel casing and encircles the front tire of a machine. It is claimed this device will prevent the theft of any automobile, for, should the machine be started with it in place, the tendency will be to overturn the car or place a brake on the wheel. It can also be used in the place of chains in case one becomes stuck in the mire . . .



Mr. Edwards intends to place his contrivance on the market in the near future.

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

