



# Dial Log



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DENVER, COLORADO

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## Director's Report by Barb Gibson

The start of any new job is an interesting experience. You find yourself energized and ready to hit the road running. Unfortunately most new jobs begin with a learning curve. That is where I find myself as I begin as the new Executive Director of the Telecommunications History Group. Fortunately Jody Georgeson and Renee Lang are here to cushion my entry and guide me through my start-up phase, and to make sure I don't forget any names! I also have the shoulders of an active volunteer group and Board of Directors to lean upon.

I have to be candid right from the start. I come to this position as a telecom neophyte. I do have some background in the computer industry with an almost forgotten firm by the name of Digital Equipment Corporation.

My first goal is to get up to speed on the history of the organization, buildings and the telecommunications industry. As a start I am reading **Herb Hackenburg's** *Muttering Machines to Laser Beams*. Sampling some of the thousands of documents is giving me a taste for the quantity and quality of the history contained in the archives. The websites for both the Seattle and Denver museums offer great virtual tours that, if you haven't already looked into – you should! <http://www.telcomhistory.org/vm/index.shtml>

Learning about (and visiting) the **Herbert H. Warrick, Jr. Museum of Communications** in Seattle September 8<sup>th</sup> for the special naming event was an especially rewarding opportunity. An article about the opening follows in this newsletter. If you aren't already familiar with our organization's site in Seattle, do check their virtual museum <http://museumofcommunications.org/> and *visit soon*. Their switching machines exhibits are unique, and the passion and knowledge of the volunteers that restore and give the tours really is wonderful.

I would love to hear your ideas for the future of our organization and museum. Send them to my attention via our email ([telcomhist@aol.com](mailto:telcomhist@aol.com)). We will be going through an update planning process in a few months and your ideas will be much appreciated. We have some exhibits in progress and planned for the future (including a new exhibit at the Denver Public Library) that we will tell you more about in future newsletters. We are always looking for archive volunteers; the never-ending projects include processing for photos, media (video, etc.), journals, periodicals and data entry galore! Please let us know if you can volunteer some time -- email us at [telcomhisto@aol.com](mailto:telcomhisto@aol.com) or call 303-296-1211.

## THG Welcomes Lisa Hensley Ekert to the Board

We are delighted to welcome **Lisa Hensley Ekert** to the Telecommunications History Group Board of Directors. Lisa is the CenturyLink Director – Wholesale Public Policy. We will benefit greatly from her participation.

### Correction

*This from Bob Haack:*

“Thank you for making me younger. *What Happened* reported that 75 years ago...1928 - Herbert Hoover was the first president to have a phone on his desk. I was born in 1928 and was under the impression that I am 85 years old.”

*But Bob, you seem a lot younger to me!*

## Museum of Communications Renaming Ceremony By Barbara Gibson



On Sunday, September 8, 2013, an enthusiast crowd of more than 80 people celebrated the dedication for the renaming of our museum in Seattle: *The Herbert H. Warrick Jr. Museum of Communications*. There were tours for the visitors; reminiscences of the long time volunteers and supporters; and stories and memories about Herb Warrick, with numerous members of his family in attendance. The dedication included cake and refreshments and the unveiling of a plaque honoring Herb's work for the museum.

In 1984, Herb imagined a place where the history of telephone technology was saved and where future generations could experience hands-on the unique role it played in the evolution of communications.



*Stephen Jones & Jo Lynne Whiting admired the step switches.*

He and a dedicated cadre of volunteers saved and refurbished step, panel and crossbar switches headed to the recycle bin, as we converted to new technologies.

The museum is a unique telecom exhibit that even the Smithsonian envies!



*Dave Dintenfass & Don Ostrand*



*Dave Dintenfass, Barb Gibson & Stephen Jones*

## John Boggs

by Ken Pratt

*This is in connection with the article "Up the Inflation Spiral," from the January – February 1954 issue of The Mountain Bell Monitor .*



I met John Boggs in late 1957 or early 1958. I was in Idaho Engineering then. At that time the staff in Denver was holding informational sessions in the states on conducting rate cases. They were discussing many of the procedures covered in this article.

When this crew came to Idaho with their presentation, I was working with AT&T engineers locating microwave radio tower sites for the Idaho portion of the proposed system from Salt Lake City to Portland. My boss at the time was **Roy Arnold** and he felt the presentation was so good that he sent me to Helena to hear it.

John Boggs, Inventory and Costs Engineer; **Ed Hunter**, Appraisal Engineer reporting to John; **George Steinhower**, Vice President of Revenue Requirements; and others conducted the session. When I was introduced to them, Ed Hunter said that I didn't know him but he knew me. He had been trying to get me transferred to Denver to work for him. He had been told I was Idaho's radio engineer and they couldn't spare me. I told him I had been involved in radio but was not now. He said that when he got back to Denver he would go to work on it again. In a few weeks I was invited to Denver, was interviewed for the job and accepted it.

Ed Hunter was then my boss and John Boggs was his boss. We were all in the same office area on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor of 931 14<sup>th</sup> Street. I got to know John Boggs quite well and very much admired and appreciated him.

John was an Engineering graduate from the University of Colorado, as I recall. He lived in Denver on East Iliff Street, several blocks east of the University of Denver. I have been to his home several times and had met his wife on numerous occasions. The house where he lived later became a "scrape off" and a new larger house is now there.

John was later transferred to AT&T in New York City. He was in New York City in 1961 and 1962, when I attended the Operating Engineers Training Program for a year and a half at the Bell Laboratories in New Jersey. My wife and I visited him and his wife a few times at their apartment while I was there. I remember one time John and his wife, Rowena, took us to dinner at a famous Italian restaurant in NYC. Rowena and my wife, Jewel, spent time together while we were all in the NYC area. Rowena had become acquainted with a man who was selling flicker flame light bulbs and other decorative bulbs that were new then. She took Jewel to his store and I think we still may have a few of his products.

John, being an engineer, was somewhat of a tinkerer. He showed me a clothes closet in his NYC apartment he had converted into his workshop. He became a true New Yorker while he lived there. He sold his car, relied on public transportation and rented a car if he did need one.

One thing I remembered about John was that if you walked down the sidewalk with him he always wanted to be in step with you. If he got out of step he would do a "skip" to get back in step with you.

John was working in NYC when the Bell System sold their teletypewriter switching network to Western Union. John told me he would have been the system coordinator except he was scheduled to retire before the sale was implemented. Elmer Coyer, our Chief Engineer, was the Mountain Bell coordinator. I was the Appraisal Engineer then and was assigned most of the work.

John was one of the persons who started the Bellco Credit Union. The last time I saw him was at a Bellco annual meeting. He was long retired from AT&T, had moved back to Denver and had lost his wife by then. Needless to say, I admired John Boggs and was quite fond of him,

## Telegraph Creek

by Jody Georgeson



Telegraph Creek is a small community located off Highway 37 in Northern British Columbia at the confluence of the Stikine River and Telegraph Creek. The only permanent settlement on the Stikine River, it is home to approximately 250 members of Tahltan First Nation and non-native residents.

In early 1866, Western Union Telegraph Company wanted to be the first to establish a line between North America and Europe. Their planned route was through BC, into Yukon and Alaska (then Russian America), under the Bering Strait, and through Russia to Europe. The Anglo-American Telegraph Company, which had tried to establish a transatlantic cable since 1857, won the race in August 1866. Western Union's effort was abandoned, but not before the line had crossed the Stikine at "Telegraph Creek."

The project started up again during the Klondike Gold Rush. In 1901, the Yukon Telegraph was established to Dawson, and Telegraph Creek earned its name once again. The line was abandoned in 1936, when wireless radio killed it.

Though the Yukon Telegraph Trail is mostly overgrown over to the south of Telegraph Creek, a 265-km stretch still survives between Telegraph Creek and Atlin, and is open to the serious backpacker.

By the way, parts of Northwest British Columbia still have no hard-wired or cell phone service; the only phone service is by satellite. Electricity is provided by generators, although they have begun to expand the grid to some of the remote areas.





## Me and My PBXs

by John Swartley



In the late 1960s I transferred into the Mountain Bell PBX department in Boulder, Colorado. Being the new kid on the block, I was assigned to clean batteries for all the Step PBXs in the area, and there were a lot of them. It was not a very pleasant experience but a man has to start somewhere.

At that time in Ma Bell's world, most of the PBXs were all Western Electric 756, 757, 761A for the small customers, and Step by Step for the larger Customers. Boulder had a lot of large government installations; most of them served large Step PBXs. The Step 701 PBXs were installed by Western Electric installers. The Boulder PBX crew installed the 700 series machines. The 756 had 80 extensions, with two cabinets. The 757A could go up to 200 extensions by adding cabinets. The 761A was a small hotel/motel PBX with 60 extensions and required a special 5 button set. They soon replaced the 761A with a 761B with which you could use 0 button sets. Later Western started manufacturing the larger 770. All of these PBXs required that a lot of space be provided by the customer. All the time used was charged to an estimate set up by the engineers; this time did not affect the supervisors' units. A lot of the crew helped on the installation and never got close to the job. The estimates allowed four to six weeks per install depending on the size of the PBX.

The larger step PBXs had cord boards for the operators to answer all the incoming calls. They were similar to those used by long distance operators for many years. The 700 series PBXs had consoles that made life easier for the operators. We also had to maintain several telephone answering service PBXs (I believe they were 557s). All the cord boards had the same basic problem; if you broke a wire in the back you would usually break two more fixing the first one. I was working on a 557 PBX when I heard on the radio in the background that Carterphone had just won a large court case against AT&T that would allow them to attach their equipment to the Bell System network. The Carterphone spokesman said it was a big breakthrough in the communication industry; of course the Bell System spokesman assured the world it would not have any effect on the industry.



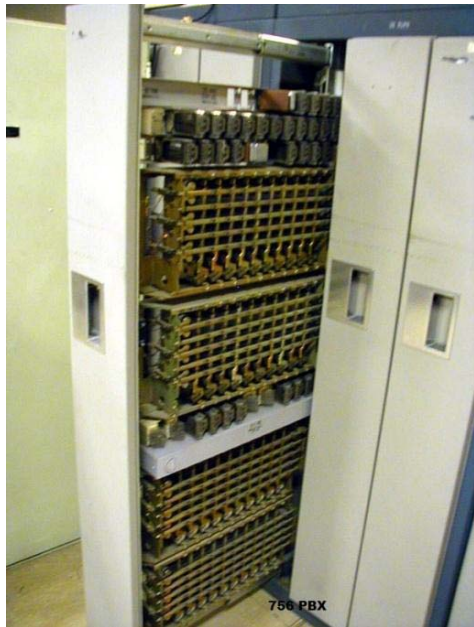
Western Electric did not have much else to offer PBX wise at that time. Mountain Bell was one of the first Bell Operating Systems to start buying PBXs from other vendors. The first one was the TE-400 from ITT. It was all electronic, it could be configured up to 100 lines per cabinet up to 4 cabinets, and it could be installed in less than a week. The downside was that you could ruin a circuit pack very easily; a shot of static electricity could shut the complete machine down if you did not attach the ground strap before opening the cabinet. There was a big fan built into the cabinet that was noisy and would also shut down the system if a piece of paper blocked the airway. ITT was different from Western Electric because they designed the PBX, sold it to the customer and let the customer work all the bugs out of it. Western spent years testing

and by the time something was ready for market, it was out of date. Soon ITT came out with a TE-400A that solved all their problems. In later years I installed several TE-400A's on the Western Slope and don't remember ever returning to repair a problem in the PBX itself.

The first TE-400 I helped install was in the Buffalo Motel in Boulder. Marketing assured him it was electronic and would be very quiet. We installed it next to his bedroom in the motel and after the first night listening to the noisy fans he had to move his bedroom to another location in the building. We also learned how easily it was shut down and what not to do. He was not a happy customer, and none of us liked to take service calls at his location.

We installed a large four cabinet TE-400 at Storage Technology, a large firm east of Boulder. The learning experiences on other TE-400s helped on this install. The trunk lines were from Louisville, a small town east of Boulder. The Louisville Central Office was a step-by-step office and the large company put a strain on it. I was working on another project in Boulder when I received a page that Storage Tech was down and no one could call out of Louisville. I dropped everything and headed to the complex.

When I walked in I noticed all the trunk lines were on hold!!! I ask the operator what was going on; she replied they gave her so much paper work to do besides answering the telephone, that she put all the trunks on hold while she completed her paperwork. I walked into her supervisor's office and released all my frustrations at him, expecting to hear about it later. When I returned to Storage Tech on my next service call, the operator jumped up, gave me a big hug and told me they took all of her extra paperwork away and all she had to do was answer the switch board.



The new electronic PBXs were different because they could be installed so quickly. The older PBX installers were used to milking the installation for weeks and did not like the change. Jerry Weuker and I were the new kids on the block and we could install one very quickly. This created a little friction between us and the older PBX installers. In the fall of 1970 Jerry and I were sent to Steamboat Springs to install a four cabinet TE-400 PBX. Each installation included a scope for testing and a back up set of major circuit packs. On all large PBX installations the

company hired a moving company from Denver to do the heavy work. On this installation they hired a crane to lift the cabinets into the building. It was quite an experience.

During the winter of 1970, not having a trained PBX technician in Steamboat Springs created problems for both the customer and the company. It was 6-8 hours before a PBX repairman could get there to solve problems. The TE-400 was not like the old relay machines; it either worked or didn't work with no in between. On one occasion the company chartered a small plane to fly us to Steamboat. The Mountain Bell city manager picked us up at the airport and drove us to the location. We swapped out one

major circuit pack, brought the machine back up and returned to the airport. Talk about an ego trip. On the flight back the plane dropped suddenly and the spare circuit packs were floating in mid air in the back. I guess we flew over a lake that created a down draft. Shortly after that trip several telephone employees were killed in a plane crash near Idaho Springs while viewing the results of a major storm break, and the Company stopped all plane charters. That was all right by me--I did not enjoy flying over the Continental Divide.

*To be continued in the next issue.*



by Herb Hackenburg

*Dilbert's* creator, Scott Adams, was working as a manager for Pacific Bell Telephone from 1986 to 1995. At this time, he created the *Dilbert* character. According to Adams, people he met and worked with at the phone company served as inspiration for many of his characters. His first cartoon strip was published on April 16, 1989.

The strip became an instant hit with employees in the Bell System. Then it quickly became a hit with comic strip fans in general. At last count, *Dilbert* is published in more than 2,000 newspapers, 65 countries and 25 languages.

Many Bell System managers could relate to *Dilbert* and his pointy-haired boss. I'm one of them. This particular boss didn't have pointy hair, but he did have a big belly. I was one of three second-level managers on the *Ohio Bell Magazine* staff.

Norm, our boss, was a district level, and Joseph Polevi, art director; Mavin Gisser and I, associate editors, reported to him. It's important to the story that you know that Joe and Marv are Jews, and that I'm German.

In one way Norm was a great boss. He totally let us do our thing. He never "bossed" at all. We'd put the issues together, assign ourselves to stories, call the people we were writing about, set up interviews, arrange for a company photographer and do the story. If Norm took us to lunch (with drinks) and paid for it, we'd tell him what his next issue would be like.

Because of this freedom we decided to do a special issue having to do with corporate responsibility to the community and environment. This was 1967, and not a lot of corporate journalists were doing this sort of thing. We decided to use special paper, change the format and have a black-and-white only magazine. *Ohio Bell Magazine*, Vol. 44 won a bunch of awards. It was also quite a surprise to the executive officers.

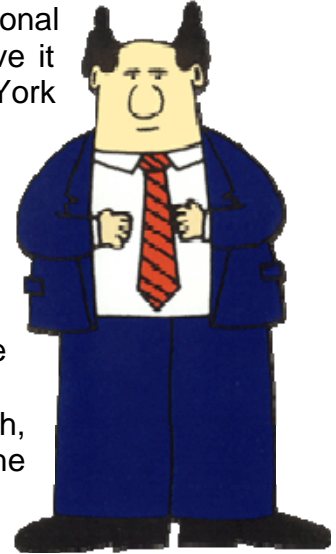


The most prestigious was the “Brotherhood ward from the National Conference of Christians and Jews. We, the staff, were to receive it personally at a huge dinner in the main ballroom of one of New York City’s 5-star hotels.

There were about eight hundred people at the dinner: some Broadway show stars, politicians, religious leaders, corporate bigwigs, labor leaders, print and media stars and a few of us workers. The actual award was presented to Norm, who was seated on the dais. The room was darkened for the presentations, so when our award was announced, we stood up and the spotlights hit us from three directions.

Norm takes the award, says a few things and closes with, “...and this honor really belongs to my staff who did all the work...two Jews and a Nazi.”

The silence thundered across the room.



### **Declaration of Principles of Employee Relations from *The Story of Western Electric, 1938***

- To pay employees adequately for services rendered;
- To maintain reasonable hours of work and safe working conditions;
- To provide continuous employment consistent with business conditions;
- To place employees in the kind of work best suited to their abilities;
- To help each individual to progress in the Company’s service;
- To aid employees in times of need;
- To encourage thrift;
- To cooperate in social, athletic and recreational activities;
- To accord each employee the right to discuss freely with executives matters concerning his or her welfare or the Company’s interest;
- To carry on the daily work in a spirit of friendliness.



*By now, you’ve probably received your membership renewal forms. Remember that THG relies on your ongoing support to save our history. Along with your check, send us a note telling us what and how you’re doing. We love to hear from our THG family members!*

*We hope you have a lovely fall, full of family and friends, colorful leaves, spooky goblins and lots of pumpkin pie!*





THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS HISTORY GROUP, INC.