



CONNECTIONS *news*

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Jody Georgeson, editor

Director's Message

As summer draws to a close, we are grateful for all the people who have visited our Connections Museum Denver and Connections Museum Seattle. Interest continues to grow, with visits from groups like the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society, King Soopers, CenturyLink Public Policy and CenturyLink interns. Many individuals have stopped by, too, from families of telephone retirees, THG Board member families, and a volunteer from the JKL Museum of Telephony in California. The Connections Museum Seattle visitor numbers continue to grow, with 102 visitors in July. The volunteers continue to work on improving the exhibits and adding more interesting equipment for the public to enjoy. We are also working on updating our website, so stay tuned for more to come on that. Thanks to all our hardworking THG volunteers.

If you are looking for a volunteer opportunity and have an interest in telecommunications and/or history, we would love to talk to you. We have an abundance of areas that we could use your help including collection inventories, archiving photos and documents or assisting in creating new programs and services. If you are in the Denver area you can call us at 303-296-1221 or email us at thg@telcomhistory.org. If you are in Seattle you can reach us at 206-767-3012 or email us at info@musuemofcommunications.org.

A graphic with a purple and pink background featuring floral and star patterns. It contains the quote: "Volunteers are not paid -- not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless."

*"Volunteers are not paid
-- not because they are
worthless, but because
they are priceless."*

Warm regards,

Lisa Berquist
THG Executive Director

In Memory - Dale Edwin Norblom (1938-2017)



We were saddened by the death of long-time volunteer Dale Norblom on June 30, 2017. Dale was one of THG's first volunteers and he made a significant contribution in populating the collections database. In 2009 Dale was inducted into the THG Volunteer Hall of Fame.

Dale retired from U S West in 1992 after 32 years of dedicated service. His first assignment with Mountain Bell in 1960 was supervising the operation of computers for the accounting department in Denver. From 1967 until 1970, he worked for the Bell Telephone Laboratory in Holmdel, Newark and Cranford, New Jersey, where once again his work involved computer systems. Returning to Denver, Dale was promoted to the Data Systems Department. In 1980 and for the remaining 12 years of his career, he was with U S West/Direct, in

charge of the printing and distribution of all white and yellow pages for the 14 states, with offices in Denver, Minneapolis and Omaha.

Dale was highly respected and loved by all of his co-workers at U S West and at THG. He will be greatly missed.

Highest in the World: Telephone between Denver and Leadville

The Leadville Daily/Evening Chronicle, September 9, 1889

The foremost city in the west is now in Telephonic connection with the greatest mining camp on earth.

First call between representatives of the press of Denver and Leadville, by telephone: "Hello, how is Leadville?", "Still booming – how is Denver?", "Still on this end of the line."

First caller Mr. Elder, a reporter for the Rocky Mountain News, Denver. 157 miles away it was answered by a reporter of the Herald Democrat. "Whisper, as though you were talking to your best girl when the old folks were abed." Then, "I can hear you plainly." Answered by the News man in a low tone.

E.B. Field of the Colorado Telephone Company also exchanged messages. The Denver representatives were in the central office at the company in the Tabor Block [*NE corner of 16th and Larimer*]. The line was a great success so far as transmission was concerned. "Tell us something of the line," asked the Leadville reporter of manager Field through the phone. Mr. Field's answer was clear and every word intelligible. "It is without doubt the highest telephone system in the world," he said.

On the cost of long distance between Leadville and Denver, the operator keeps "time" and after the customary "Hello's," the charge is \$1 for a five minute conversation. At the end of five minutes the talkers are notified. Of course, the operator lets only responsible parties talk.

The Hawthorne Effect



Among the many treasures in our archives are microfiche copies of the original Hawthorne Studies documents.

In the late 1920s, managers at Hawthorne Works - a Western Electric factory in Illinois - asked themselves if employees would be more productive in a well-lit environment than in one that is poorly-lit? This was really the beginning of the quality revolution in American business, and questions that now seem simple to us now were yet to be answered.

The managers hired some consultants and commissioned a study. Their findings are probably what you would expect. Well-lit lighting increased productivity, as did a few other variables, such as having a clean workstation, allowing employees to build and work in teams, and having regular breaks. While these were the direct findings from the Hawthorne study, none of them were groundbreaking. But the researchers made another observation, which has become known as "The Hawthorne Effect."

During the Hawthorne study, when researchers adjusted an independent variable, the variable that can be manipulated to measure its impact on another dependent variable, productivity changed. But, after a relatively short time, those productivity gains disappeared and output ended up drifting back to the previous level. The conclusion was that changes in the work environment could impact productivity, but those productivity gains are only short-term. Like any good researcher would, those working with Hawthorne Works scratched their heads and asked why.

Their answer became known as the Hawthorne Effect and is the same principle that leads most drivers to slow down when they see a cop. Like the speeder reacting when seeing a cop, the participants of the Hawthorne Works study changed their behavior because they were receiving attention, but once that attention was gone, they reverted to their 'normal' behavior.

Conducted nearly a century ago, the results of those studies continue to be evaluated and debated today.



The Blizzard of '49: Heroes, Vail Medals and the Snow-Buggy

By Don Warsavage

We thought this blizzard story would help cool us off after the long, hot summer. This article appeared originally in the AUSWR Retiree Guardian, and is reprinted with permission from the author.

Back in the 1940s, millions of people settled down in their living rooms at 7:00 pm each Monday night to listen to the popular Bell Telephone Hour, a national NBC radio program dedicated to live classical music. It usually started with a monologue advertising telephone service. On February 21, 1949, however, the program's unusual opening started as follows:

Announcer: "Down from the North it screamed . . . one of the worst blizzards in the history of the West . . . tons of snow across roads and highways . . . residents of Cheyenne, Wyoming are warned to stay in their homes. Calls of distress flooded the telephone lines."

Woman (anxiously): ". . . Operator, our little Michael is awfully sick. We can't bring our baby to town. What are we going to do?"

Announcer: "For four days and nights a telephone crew took their snow buggy through the wilderness of snow, cold and howling wind—over fields and fences....."

That legendary blizzard started Sunday afternoon, January 2, 1949. The Wyoming Eagle, on January 5th headlined: "GIANT RESCUE BEGUN FOR 2,000 MAROONED," and went on to state, "the howling storm had lasted for over 60 hours." The front page featured a photo that showed a drift over 10 feet deep in downtown Cheyenne and stated that some drifts outside town reached over 20 feet deep.



The same day The Wyoming Tribune, the other Cheyenne newspaper, reported that 14 intercontinental trains had stalled in the deep snow in Eastern Wyoming with passengers on board.

On February 6th The Wyoming Tribune ran an article headlined: "BLIZZARD UNABLE TO STOP SNOW-BUGGY IN RESCUE MISSIONS." Three telephone company employees and their supervisor were singled out for their heroic efforts. The article highlighted the virtues of the snow-buggy, the telephone company's machine with a cab mounted on tracks and two skis in front, designed to carry two passengers over the snow.

The snow-buggy was indeed critical to the rescues performed, but the real story is about the men who made it all happen. Their amazing exploits were detailed in a memorandum written by J.H. Christensen, Wyoming Plant Superintendent.

The following story was put together from Christensen's memorandum, the Cheyenne newspapers mentioned above and several issues of The Monitor, a monthly magazine published for employees by Mountain States Telephone Company.



On Monday the snow and wind raged on. Hotel rooms, lobbies and depots were filled with stranded travelers. Many employees couldn't get to work and once there, couldn't get home. The snow buggy was used that day to ease some of these problems, but frequently stalled.

Tuesday was no better, wind and heavy snow continued. When Keith Hough, a combination man, got ready to leave for work, he saw that there was no way his car could make it. But he was needed to help with the snow buggy, so he donned his winter gear and set out on foot, pushing through the snow for 15 blocks to the company garage.

Hough's partner, Bill Edmunds, a Cable Splicer, lived in the same area, but found he couldn't budge any of his doors. He found a window he could open and clear the snow. He scrambled through, dropped into the drift and began the long slog to work.

Once they got to the garage, the snow buggy refused to start. They set about cleaning the carburetor, the gas line, and gas tank. They had just finished putting it together when the garage phone rang. It was the Wyoming State Patrol. An expectant mom needed to get to the hospital immediately.

They had to leave the regular streets and drive the snow-buggy through some back yards to get to the address. They loaded Mr. and Mrs. Hansen into the cab with them, a cozy fit in the small cab (and not the last time they'd need to overload the snow buggy).

The four of them, jammed together, started off to the hospital. The storm intensified, reducing visibility. They couldn't tell where the streets were. They drove to one side far enough to see a house, tree or buried car then veered back the opposite way; using this method they zigzagged their way to the hospital. Later on Mrs. Hansen gave birth to a little boy.

On the way back the engine on the snow-buggy started coughing and sputtering. They nursed it into a Firestone filling station and garage (the only one open in the city). They had to remove the drive shaft, clean the carburetor, gas tank and gas line again, then put it all back together. It is easy to believe as they had taken off their heavy coats and had tools and parts

scattered all over the floor, that their descriptions of the snow buggy would not have been printable in either The Tribune or The Eagle.

They got it running again and it was used heavily until 11:00 that night. The Wire Chief at the phone company, C. B. Webb, made an arrangement with the local Cheyenne Fire Chief to house the snow buggy in the fire station to keep it ready for possible night-time emergencies. Hough and Edmunds stayed in a local hotel. But at 2:00 a.m. Hough's phone woke him up. The Red Cross was on the line. A Mrs. Merrill, was expecting a baby and was in need of hospitalization. She lived over 6 miles east of town.

When Hough reached the fire station he found that Edmunds hadn't been called and was not there. A local Cheyenne fireman volunteered to join Hough. That night the wind was driving at 50 to 70 miles per hour; the temperature was recorded at 5° below zero.

The driven snow, amplified by the lights of the snow buggy, made it nearly impossible to see the way ahead. They found that by looking up they could make slow progress by following the street lights. Hough used the zigzagging method he'd discovered earlier. At the edge of town they ran out of street lights and could not see their way forward at all. They could barely make out the telephone line above them and they tried following it into the darkness. It was too dangerous, so they turned back.

The Fire Chief told Hough he should get some sleep and showed him to a bed in the fire house. It was around 3:30 am. Hough had barely laid his head on the pillow, when a tow truck pulled up outside. Along with the driver were Mr. and Mrs. Rosenblum. The tow truck was the only vehicle that could get to her house, but it could not make it to the hospital. Mrs. Rosenblum was in labor. Hough loaded the two into the snow buggy and zigzagged his way to the hospital. Thirty two minutes later their baby was born.

When Hough got back to the Fire Station, William Payne, another combination man, was there to assist, replacing the local fireman. By now it was light enough to try again to get out to Merrill place.

On the way they encountered many stalled vehicles. In one of the stalled vehicles they found Richard Bivens, who excitedly explained that his wife and family were trapped inside their home about four miles east of town and they had no heat. He was desperate to get back and help them. It was on their way, so they loaded him into the buggy. The highway east of town was a mess, scattered with stuck vehicles. When trying to get around a large truck the snow buggy fell into the barrow pit and was immobilized. It took a half hour to dig it out.



When they got to the Bivens' ranch, only the snow covered roof was visible. Mr. Bivens struggled around the house through the snow, frantically searching for a way in. He finally found the top of a window still exposed and by crouching down and yelling, raised his family. They were all okay.

Hough and Payne left Mr. Bivens safe with his family and pushed on. The ground blizzard was fierce, hampering visibility. They decided to follow the power line across country away from the highway right

over the fences buried beneath the snow. They couldn't see much in front of them but by looking up they could maintain their direction by following the power wires.

They finally reached the Merrill Ranch, but before they could take Mrs. Merrill to the hospital in Cheyenne, they had to take the Merrills' 3 year-old daughter to her Grandfather's ranch about another mile and a half further east. With the little girl on board, they travelled



along the highway, this time checking more abandoned cars.

They found one car in a precarious position teetering over the edge of a ditch and half filled with snow. Two young men climbed awkwardly out the door. Their faces were hidden because their shirts were buttoned over their heads. Their hands were covered with several pairs of socks. As words of gratitude tumbled out of them, they said they were University of Colorado students

heading back to school. They had been trapped there for 62 hours. They had emptied their suitcases and put on all the clothes they could find; pants on pants, shirts on shirts and so on. They were helped into the snow buggy and went on to Grandfather Merrill's ranch.

After getting a hot meal at the ranch, the two students, Mr. Sams and Mr. Kissick, rode with Hough and Payne back to pick up Mrs. Merrill and take her to town. From there the snow buggy contained Hough, Payne, Sams, Kissick and a pregnant Mrs. Merrill with over six miles of blizzard to get through.

The journey was slow and treacherous and when they got about a mile and a half east of town, the snow buggy lurched into a hole. The crunching sound they heard could only mean a broken ski. When they got out and inspected, they found both skis had broken, disabling the snow buggy. They carried only one spare ski on board.

Fortunately, they were about two blocks from a filling station called Dutch Mill. They carried Mrs. Merrill through the snow to Dutch Mill, and got Sams and Kissick there, too.

They knew another spare ski for the buggy was stored in the telephone company garage. They called from Dutch Mill and Edmunds answered. He took the ski on a company truck and was able to drive to within a mile of Dutch Mill before being stopped by the deep snow. Edmunds got out of the truck and pushed through the snow, dragging the spare ski behind him. When they started work to replace the skis they discovered the only tool they had was a hand axe. So with a hand axe, whatever tools they carried in their pockets, pure grit and determination, they chopped the broken skis off and successfully attached the spares.

The two students were left in the safety of Dutch Mill to await later rescue. Mrs. Merrill was taken in the repaired snow buggy and transferred to the company truck. Edmunds then drove her to get medical attention.

Hough, Payne and the snow buggy were not done yet. In Cheyenne, they rescued a man who'd injured his back and couldn't walk. They took him to Veterans' Hospital.

They went out again to a ranch 7 miles east of town. They collected a man with frozen feet and another man and his dog, both suffering from exhaustion. The dog thanked Payne for his efforts by biting him on the hand, but the dog was so weak it did no damage.

Remember the little boy, Michael from the Telephone Hour lead-in? The next day they went out 2 miles from town to rescue a little guy named Michael who needed medical help. They brought him and his parents to the doctor.

Mr. Christensen in the summary of his memorandum said: "Many times during these trips, blowing snow and zero temperatures seemed to be almost more than one could stand, and due to the poor visibility the success of each trip was doubtful and the job hazardous." He went on to point out that at the time of his writing 11 people in the Cheyenne area had been found frozen to death.

The July, 1950 issue of The Monitor reported that Mountain States Telephone Company President F. P. Ogden, in a formal presentation and to the applause of their fellow employees, awarded three silver Vail Medals and \$500 each to Keith Hough, William Payne, and William Edmunds.



Ten Little Linemen From Gilmore's Gang

This poem is in the March, 1930 issue of the Coast Broadcaster, an employee magazine published by Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company.

Ten little linemen starting on the line,
One fell off the truck, then there were nine.
Nine little linemen raising up a weight,
One let go his hand line, then there were eight.
Eight little linemen climbing up to heaven,
One dropped his hand axe, now there were seven.
Seven little linemen putting up sticks,
One let go his pike pole, then there were six.
Six little linemen forgot they were alive,
One stood on the messenger, then there were five.
Five little linemen on the ground once more,
One upset the soldering pot, then there were four.
Four little linemen trimming up a tree,
One trimmed the high line, then there were three.
Three little linemen hustling to get through,
One forgot his safety belt, then there were two.
Two little linemen their job was almost done,
Tapped in the wrong line, then there was one.
One little lineman felt his life he owed
To playing Safety First, according to the Code.

"No job is so important and no service is so urgent, that we cannot take time to perform our work safely."

Bell System Safety Code



