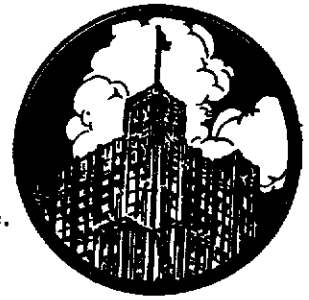


Dial-Log

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Jody Georgeson, Editor

Executive Director's Report

by Herb Hackenburg

If being busy equates to being successful, then the Telecommunications History Group is getting more and more successful each day. The past few weeks have been the busiest the THG has ever had—huge research projects, data system upgrades and problems, public speaking engagements and administrative challenges combined to make the times interesting and the days go by extremely fast. Jody and Julianne have further news in their contributions to this epistle.

Research Projects

We just concluded two major research projects -one for U S WEST and one for Qwest - both having to do with office decor featuring telephone history. Of course, these projects were in addition to the assorted research jobs we're asked to do nearly every day:

- *Advanced Technologies-U S WEST.* AT has moved its executive offices to the top floors of the old Mountain Bell Headquarters. Working with AT's decorator by providing her

with details of the original 1929 décor of the two floors (carpet and furniture), we also provided her with historic photographs and artifacts.

- *Qwest Switch Site Center.* We worked with Qwest to provide photographs for their new Switch Site Center at 910 15th Street. The center now sports eight 3 ft. by 4 ft. historic telephone photographs. We also received some relatively rare artifacts from one of the Qwest employees.
- *U S WEST Training Center.* This is a major interior decoration project. We've finished Phase I, furnishing several historic photographs, extensive research and several artifacts, all of which are in place in the recently renovated Training Center in Lakewood, Colorado. Now we're entering Phase II of the decoration project.
- *U S WEST Wholesale Markets.* With three days lead time, we were asked to furnish photographs, stock certificates, research, \$10,000 worth of artifacts for display and a speaker for a three-day Wholesale Markets

95 database. We're about ready to retire our last 386 machine. Actually, we're not going to retire the machine, but plan to keep it as an archive tool so we can "read" old databases we may run across in the future.

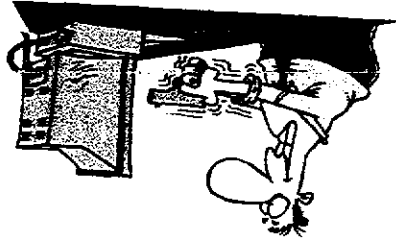
Meanwhile, volunteer, Jerry Wild, has networked our major machines using equipment and network cards given to us from a U S WEST office network taken out of service.

While all of this was going on we seemed to be beset by problems. We had a virus completely wipe out our original Gateway machine. While the machine is basically useless, we were able to save nearly everything in it. Our IBM Aptiva machine has been constantly acting up. We finally had to have a computer geek work on it. He was able to strip the machine of all of its programming/memory files and save them in external storage. Now we're trying to reprogram the Aptiva. The computer guy told us the IBM Aptiva was a piece of junk that IBM knew about it and that's why they were so cheap. He said we also asked the Aptiva to do more than it was quipped to do. As I write this, the Aptiva's on/off switch doesn't work. As I edited this, I found that the Aptiva has a *second on/off switch* hiding in the back and someone had accidentally hit it, thus turning the machine off completely.



Pointe Hilton--Tapatio Cliffs Resort in Phoenix. I had the pleasure of talking telephone history to the 80 top managers of U S West's most profitable market unit *and* spending three days at a top resort for four hours work, and the History Group made a tidy profit.

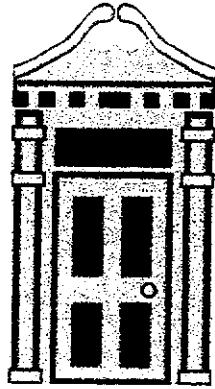
- *Assorted U S WEST Departments.* We furnished historical research for U S WEST Dex, U S WEST Public Relations and Public Policy Departments, and Creative Services.
- *MediaOne.* We furnished research and a photograph of Gary Arnes for the International Division of MediaOne.



System Upgrades and Problems

Board member/volunteer Mike

Flavin has spent hundreds of hours designing the various Access 98 databases we're using in the archive, e.g., *manuscript, photographs, artifacts, video/audio/film, library and directory.* Meanwhile, we've been using all sorts of PCs ranging from a very old and slow 386 machine to a 500 MHz Pentium III tSumami. While most of our databases use Access 95 software, our directory database is in an early version of Q&A software. Because of the old software we've been forced to use in our 386 machines. By spending an unbelievable amount of volunteer time at his home computer, Mike prepared a workable software program that allowed the Q&A data to convert directly into our Access



Public Talks & Tours

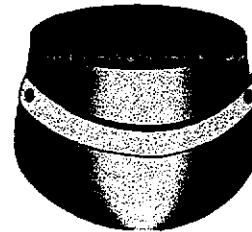
I'm being asked to give more telephone history talks and conduct more tours of the Mountain Bell Headquarters Building and of our archive.

Talks. Most of the talks have been/will be presented to outside groups such as the Rocky Mountain Guides Association and the Eastern Colorado Historical Society (Cheyenne Wells). However, the presentation I made to 80 members of the leadership team of the U S WEST Wholesale Markets in Phoenix was video taped per a request from Phil Burgess, U S WEST's new Public Relations vice president. The History Group's Executive committee and I had a meeting with Burgess who acknowledged that he wanted to see, "What this history guy, Herb Hackenburg looked like." He said he hadn't viewed the tape, but he liked the book (*Muttering Machines to Laser Beams.*)

Because of questions and requests for more telephone stories, my one-hour presentation to the Rocky Mountain Guides lasted nearly two hours. After the presentation, Barbara Foes, president of the guides, informed me that she's also the president of the Historic Denver Guild and she volunteered to provide the Historic Denver mailing list for our first Annual

Fund Raiser - *The Last of the Bell System Palaces Tour and Cocktails* - event. More about this first annual fundraising event in a later newsletter.

Our trip to Cheyenne Wells promises to be interesting in that a group of telephone retirees has a state gambling money grant to restore the original telephone building in town. This building was the site of significant telephone history since it housed the nation's first radio/telephone system that provided local "wireless" telephone service to isolated ranches in the area decades before the cellular phone was invented. We (an artist friend who designed our letterhead, and I--we both weigh well over 200 pounds) are really looking forward to being guests at an old-fashioned potluck dinner hosted by a passel of good cooks.



Tours -to date. Most of our tours seem to be groups from the senior centers in the metroplex. We'd like to conduct more school tours. It looks like we'll be conducting a special tour for some staff and volunteers from the Colorado Historical Society and for a couple of leaders from Historic Denver in the near future. Archive tours have been given to seven employee groups, five from U S WEST, and two from Qwest. In general, these groups are made up of young employees (under 30) who seem fascinated with telephone history.

Farewell, Eleanor
By Herb Hackenbourg

Ken Clymer (the History Group's first volunteer, who passed away in 1993) and I had a "magic day" in 1992 when we went to Jack MacAllister to ask his help on getting the Telecommunications History Group started as an independent nonprofit organization.

While he didn't feel he had the time to give the History Group the time it deserved, Jack took us down the hall to tell Howard Doerr our story. The rest of the day was "Kismet" for Ken and I. After listening to our story Howard said, "When do we start?" Within the hour Howard recruited Bob Runice and Larry DeWuth to join our little band. I had put together a list of folks who might be good board members. Ken and I returned to our tiny history office on the 15th floor of the Mountain Bell Headquarters Building. I began to make phone calls. Every person I called, answered the phone, listened to my spiel and said they'd be glad to serve on the History Group Board. *Every single one!*

In 1983, I spent many days in the Western History and Genealogy Department of the Denver Public Library doing research for my book. I was impressed by the quality and quantity of the History Department's resource material and the overwhelming eagerness of the staff to assist me in my research efforts. I had heard that the world-renowned Western History Department was the product of its long-time manager, Eleanor Gehres. Hence, her name was at the top of my board member wish list. I called. Eleanor answered. Eleanor listened, and said, "Count me in, just tell me when and

Administration

Government mandated collocation is causing us problems. As competitive companies move their interface equipment into fenced-off sections of U S WEST's switching centers, floor space in the previously nearly empty switching centers is becoming a premium. Historically, the phone company allowed Telephone Pioneer projects to be housed in the nearly empty central offices. No more. The Pioneers



are being dislocated by collocation. Unfortunately, several of these Pioneer projects were really repositories for telephone company artifacts, now the Pioneers are being forced to find other places for their historic material. We are becoming such a place of last resort. The Boulder Pioneers were the latest group to be dislocated by collocation, and the History Group ended up with a carload of artifacts. We're no longer able to accept artifacts and are nearly out of space for manuscript material. We're going to have to begin selling some of our high-quality duplicate artifacts and try to gain some more space.

There's an old story about the person who wished his computer were as easy to use as his telephone. That wish has come true, since I no longer know how to use my telephone.

Stroustrup

where you're holding the first meeting." I had never meet, nor even talked to the lady before.

When I did meet Eleanor at that first board meeting, it was apparent that this was a very special person. She introduced herself to the rest of the board and began contributing intelligent questions, suggestions and answers immediately after Howard called the meeting to order. Eleanor was elected as a vice president and chairperson of the program committee at that first meeting. She guided the History Group in her superb leadership capacity until her death from cancer on March 18, 2000.

Quite frankly, the History Group owes nearly all of its professional growth to the freely given guidance of Eleanor Gehres. *We'll never be able to thank you enough, Eleanor.*



Volunteer Corner

By Jody Georgeson

I'm happy to report that we have three new volunteers who each are already contributing from 8 to 16 hours a week to the cause.

Beth Trudgen is our news clip archivist and is helping us file the thousands of news clips generated by today's telecommunications industry. Beth's father was Mountain Bell employee Francis Trudgen who, as a Telephone Pioneer, designed the signage now used by the National Park Service. He owned the farm which is now Glendale, Colorado. Beth still lives in the original farmhouse nestled in between all of the multistory apartment buildings and condos that make up Glendale today.

Don Hoffman recently retired from U S WEST where he was on the staff of the group in charge of installing U S WEST's new DSL deployments. Don has some very interesting and well-documented insights to this program that we plan to do an oral history about. Don has a television/electrical engineering background, so he is our videotape archivist. He is organizing our extensive collection of non-print material, and creating an audio-visual archive.

Bob Haack is our first long-distance volunteer. He is doing data entry of the photograph inventory, from his home in Rio Verde, Arizona. We send him handwritten copies of the inventory, then communicate via e-mail about the input.

On the negative side, we temporarily lost three of our stalwarts. **Georg Ek**, is recovering from major surgery and will be out of pocket for six to ten weeks. **Lee Andersen** will not be available to the History Group before next fall - we believe he's promoting his latest book. **Terry Quirke** will not return from his annual sojourn to his winter hideout in the Florida Keys until June.

Contest Winner!

Jeanette Dunham of Bloomington, MN was the first to guess that Julianne's middle name is *Rhoda*, and received an antique stock certificate from the Northwestern Telephone Exchange Company. Congratulations, Jeanette!

Close runners up were **Patti Bodwell** of Aurora, CO and **Harley Jones** of Littleton, CO. Some of our favorite wrong guesses were Rose, Roxanne, and Rhiannon.

Retiree Memories

Last July, Jim Perry received a wonderful letter from his former co-worker, C. E. "Bud" White, Jr. Jim and Bud were gracious enough to share it with us, and we'd like to share parts of it with you. The letter reminisces about his life and service in the telephone industry.

Bud retired from Northwestern Bell 32 years ago. He is 93 years old and lives in Mesa, Arizona. Space prevents us from publishing the entire letter, but here are some highlights.

I believe the medical profession contributes more to individuals by easing or curing pain, and next comes people who by design and construction provide lines of communications to the whole world by touching a few buttons.

In 1926, in Wood Lake, Nebraska, I was a lineman on a crew that constructed a line from them to Valentine, Nebr. When completed, the Wood Lake people declared a holiday & invited our crew to the celebration. At high noon they completed a call to Valentine. When the operator at Valentine came on - "This is the Valentine operator, may I help you?" - grown men cried, they were so happy - no longer isolated.

When I left (home) after high school to report for work for N.W.B. at Bennington, Nebr., my dear old dad told me two things; I - do every job they give you to the best of your ability - and 2 - any time you feel you're not treated fairly, come on home. I came home in 1932 when all single construction men were laid off due to the depression. And that turned out to be the finest thing for me, because I then met Alice. We married 9-16-34, after I got back to work.

In 1944 I was commander of a Signal Construction Battalion. At that time the 15th Air Force bombers and fighter supporters were located in southern Italy and making bomb runs into Germany. The deeper they bombed into Germany, the more difficult it became for the fighters to go the distance fuel-wise.

My battalion's mission was to construct 600 miles of line up the Adriatic Coast to Ancona, where there were 3 small air fields that, with land communications, they could move the fighters to those fields. Then the bombers would take off and the fighters would join them when they got to Ancona. Round trip it saved the fighters 1200 miles each run, and they were able to escort the bombers to the heart of Germany, thereby bringing an end to the European war at a much earlier date.

My outfit received a letter of commendation for completing the line 36 days ahead of a deadline date. We maintained the line for a year. Several times, natives on Hitler's side tied sticks of dynamite to the poles and blew out sections which we would immediately rebuild. I felt proud to have been a part of shortening the European war - saving many lives.

Upon returning home in December 1945:

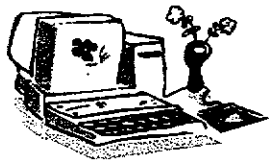
I was appointed construction supervisor - Sioux City District - the



promotion partly due to my success in the service.

In 1951, I was transferred to DSM...as Iowa Area Construction Supervisor, which job I held until 1-1-68, when I retired.

According to Jim Perry, Bud "spent much of his last 5-10 years on the staff involved in burying cable - replacing the aerial wire leads that he had been a part of building in the 1920s & 30s."



Notes From our Archivist

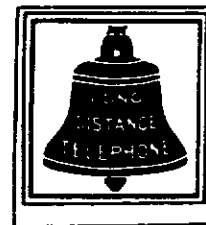
by Julianne Rhoda Fletcher

Since our archivist hails from Walla Walla, Washington, we thought we would devote a few paragraphs to telephone history of the Pacific Northwest. The following excerpts are from a paper read by L. K. Wiese, in 1962, at the Northwest History Lecture Series of the Puget Sound Council for the Social Sciences in conjunction with the Seattle Historical Society and the Seattle Museum of History and Industry. Mr. Wiese began his remarks telling about the earliest telephones in Washington State, which were in Seattle, Olympia and Vancouver Barracks in 1878. Then, in June 1878, a pair of telephones arrived at Walla Walla. From then on, the development on the west side and the east side of the state are so dissimilar that Mr. Wiese followed each side separately. He talked about the east side of Washington State:

I would like to tell you something of how long distance calls

were handled. In each of the towns some sort of messenger service was necessary to have people come to the telephone station. Mostly this was done by foot or by a boy on a bicycle at 5 or 10 cents a trip. In my own hometown of Spangle, the telephone was located in the only hotel in town. Spangle then had a population of about 150. Amos McMichael, the hotel proprietor, mounted a bell about the size of a locomotive bell on the roof of the hotel and he worked out a system of code rings to cover all of the businesses and leading families. When one was wanted on the telephone everybody in town knew it as the bell could be heard in every corner of our village.

Going into the 1890s there was still no telephone connection between the several commercial centers in the Northwest, such as Portland, Puget Sound and the Inland Empire. However, in 1892, a line from Seattle-Tacoma to Portland was built and a line from Spokane was completed into Portland, thus connecting Spokane and Seattle-Tacoma via Portland.



1889

In the Palouse Country barbed wire telephone lines became quite popular until they gave way to the so-called high-lines which gave less trouble and better service. The barbed wire telephone line was simply ordinary barbed wire fencing used to convey a voice, with no insulation used. When there was a break in the fence caused by roads, poles were set and the fence was

This story by an anonymous author was sent to us by our good friend Will Ebeling in Sun City, Arizona. It appeared in the September 1998 edition of the "Pilgrim Roadrunner." We were touched by the story and thought you would enjoy it, too.

Information, Please



When I was quite young, my father had one of the first telephones in our neighborhood. I remember well the polished old case fastened to the wall. The shiny receiver hung on the side of the box. I was too little to reach the telephone, but used to listen with fascination when my mother used to talk to it. Then I discovered that somewhere inside the wonderful device lived an amazing person – her name was “Information please” and there was nothing she did not know. “Information please” could supply anybody’s number and the correct time.

My first personal experience with this genie-in-the-bottle came one day while my mother was visiting a neighbor. Amusing myself at the tool bench in the basement, I whacked my finger with a hammer. The pain was terrible, but there didn’t seem to be any reason in crying because there was no one home to give sympathy. I walked around the house sucking my throbbing finger, finally arriving at the stairway. The telephone!

connected with the fence on the other side of the road by a wire, which was high enough above the road to permit any ordinary conveyance to pass under.

In spite of the thousands of miles of wire fence in the Inland Empire, few of the farmers had telephones in the early days. It was still a marvel of science to many people. I have a little story of my paternal grandmother who came to the Palouse Country in the late 1880s from Germany. She never learned to speak English and had never used a telephone. During one of her visits to our home in Spokane about 1908, my father called from his place of work and during the call asked for Grandma to be put on the phone. Grandma was quite reluctant, but after a great deal of coaxing, she put the receiver to her ear and heard Dad start to talk German to her. I can still recall the startled look on her face as she turned to us and said,

“Mein Gott, es spricht Deutsch!”

Here’s a poem that volunteer Ken Pratt found on the inside back cover of an 1888 stock-owner’s ledger from the Rocky Mountain Bell Telephone Company of Salt Lake City, UT. It is signed H.L.A. Culmer:

“Thoughts that flash
Midst wires and Bells
O’er craggy peaks
And flowery dells”

Wow! We don’t have shareholders who thapsodize about the business like that anymore.

Quickly, I ran for the footstool in the parlor and dragged it to the landing. Climbing up, I unhooked the receiver in the parlor and held it to my ear. "Information Please," I said into the mouthpiece just above my head. A click or two and a small clear voice spoke into my ear. "Information." "I hurt my finger..." I wailed into the phone. The tears came readily now that I had an audience. "Isn't your mother home?" came the question. "Nobody's home but me." I blubbered. "Are you bleeding?" "No," I replied. "I hit my finger with the hammer and it hurts." "Can you open your ice box?" she asked. I said I could. "Then chip off a little piece of ice and hold it to your finger," said the voice.

After that, I called "Information Please" for everything. I asked her for help with my geography and she told me where Philadelphia was. She helped me with my math. She told me my pet chipmunk that I had caught in the park just the day before would eat fruits and nuts.

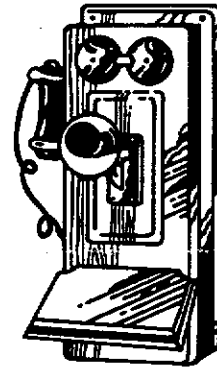
Then, there was the time Petey, our pet canary, died. I called "Information Please" and told her the sad story. She listened, then said the usual things grown-ups say to sooth a child. But I was not consoled. I asked her, "Why is it that birds should sing so beautifully and bring joy to all the families, only to end up a heap of feathers on the bottom of a cage?" She must have sensed my deep concern, for she said quietly, "Paul, always remember that there are other worlds to sing in." Somehow I felt better.

Another day I was on the telephone. "Information Please." "Information," said the now familiar voice. "How do you spell 'fix'?" I asked.

All this took place in a small town in the Pacific Northwest. When I

was nine years old, we moved across the country to Boston. I missed my friend very much. "Information Please" belonged in that old wooden box back home, and I somehow never thought of trying the tall, shiny new phone that sat on the table in the hall.

As I grew into my teens, the memories of those childhood conversations never really left me. Often, in moments of doubt and perplexity, I would recall the serene sense of security I had then. I appreciated now how patient, understanding and kind she was to have spent her time on a little boy.

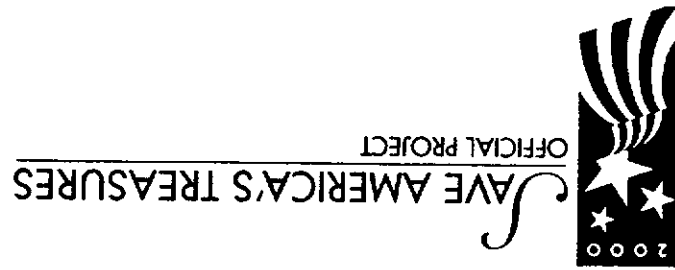


A few years later, on my way west to college, my plane put down in Seattle. I had about a half an hour or so between planes. I spent 15 minutes or so on the phone with my sister, who lived there now. Then without thinking what I was doing, I dialed my hometown operator and said, "Information Please." Miraculously, I heard the small clear voice I knew so well, "Information." I hadn't planned this, but I heard myself saying, "Could you please tell me how to spell 'fix'?" there was a long pause. Then came the soft-spoken answer, "I guess your finger must have healed by now." I laughed. "So it's really still you," I said. "I wonder if you have any idea how much you meant to me during that time." "I wonder," she said, "if you



New Contest!
 Alexander Graham Bell filed for patent on the telephone on February 14, 1876. It was granted on his birthday, March 3, and officially issued on March 7, 1876. It wasn't until three days later, however, that Thomas Watson heard the first intelligible sentence ever transmitted by telephone.
 The words Watson heard, the first heard over a telephone line, were a plea for help. Bell had spilled sulfuric acid on himself, and cried, "Mr. Watson, come here, I want you."
 This historic incident occurred on March 10, 1876. What day of the week was it?
 The first reader to call (303-296-1221), e-mail (telcomhist@aol.com) or mail the correct answer, will receive a surprise!

know how much your calls meant to me. I never had any children, and I used to look forward to your calls. "I told her how often I had thought of her over the years, and asked if I could call her again when I came back to visit my sister. "Please do," she said. "Just ask for Sally."
 Three months later, I was back in Seattle. A different voice answered "Information Please." I asked for Sally. "Are you a friend?" she asked. "Yes - a very old friend," I answered. "I'm sorry to have to tell you this," she said. "Sally had been working part-time the last few years because she was sick. She died five weeks ago."
 Before I could hang up, she said, "Wait a minute. Did you say your name was Paul?" "Yes." "Well, Sally left a message for you. She wrote it down in case you called. Let me read it to you." The note said, "Tell him I still say there are other worlds to sing in. He'll know what I mean." I thanked her and hung up. I know what Sally meant.



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