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Executive Director's Report
by Herb Hackenberg

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 US 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-US 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.

- **US 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.

- **US 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
diate to convert directly into our access software program that allowed the Q&A computer software program had allowed the Q&A computer, which presented a valuable amount of volunteer time at his home.

In any event, we are using all sorts of magnetic/printed/photographs, microfiche, databases we use in the archive, describing the various access 95 software, our directory service. Meanwhile, we are doing a very old and slow PDS using from a very old and slow IBM 368 machine to a 500 MHZ Pentium III machine. Meanwhile, we haven't bought any of those big machines. The machine on the table is big, much big.

Board member/volunteer mine.

System Updates and Problems

Meanwhile, volunteers have spent hundreds of hours.

Medicare

The International Division of Medicare, we finished research.

Debtors and Credit Services.

Referrals and Public Services.

And a part of W & S WEST.

Meanwhile, we have access software, which we have not gone to in the archive, but plan to use the mainframe machine. Actually, we're 95 database. We're about ready to rewrite.
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 watched 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 Foos, 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.
Count me in. Just tell me when and
answered. Eleanor listened, and said,
member with(lr) called. Eleanor
her name was at the top of my heart
the names, Eleanor answered. Hence,
World-Renowned Western History
Department was the product of its long-
research efforts. I had heard that the
researcher and the overwhelming
resource material and the overwhelming
quantity of the History Department's
was impressed by the quality and
Library doing research for my book I
in 1983. I spent many days in the
Board. Dear Single one!
Bod hand in the History Group
ed to see the History Group
answer the phone. I called, answered
person to make phone calls. Every
Mountain Bell Headquarters, Building 1
history office on the 1st floor of the
members. Ken and I decided to give
folks who might be good board
friend and I had together a list of
White and I had put together a list of
Rennie and Larry Demko to join our
Within the Hall, Howard raced here
and I. After answering our story
rest of the day was „Knew“ for Ken
History Group. Ken and I started
is the History Group history of the
White where he didn’t feel he had the
organization
standard as an independent nonprofit
the Telecommunications History Group
Heather
to ask the question. We arrived in
1992 when we went to Jack
and I had a “miracle”apor
Group’s first volunteer, who passed
Eleanor
A Farewell, Eleanor

Some more space.
quality duplication articles and try to gain
have to begin selling some of our high-
manuscript material. We're going to
and we need our space for
were unoccupied. We're going to
we're no longer able to accept additional
ended up with a cartload of artifacts.
last resort. The Boulder Pioneers were
We are becoming such a piece of
pieces for their history material.
Pioneers are being forced to find other
projects were really responsibilities for
foundament, several of those Pioneer
are being dissolved by collection.
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 Georgeason

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.
1942 - Henry was off to war during the winter months. We had to be ready for anything. I came home in December.

My work was not the same. We were not in the European war - surely not. I was on the Pacific side. Our main concern was to keep our men safe and healthy. We had to work hard to stay in shape.

In 1944, I was appointed construction supervisor - SAD OF DISTRICT 2. I was in charge of construction work in December. My work was not the same. We were not in the European war - surely not. I was on the Pacific side. Our main concern was to keep our men safe and healthy. We had to work hard to stay in shape.

In 1945, I returned home in December. My work was not the same. We were not in the European war - surely not. I was on the Pacific side. Our main concern was to keep our men safe and healthy. We had to work hard to stay in shape.

Last July, Jim Perry received a wonderful letter from his former co-worker, C. E. "Bud" Wilson. He is 92 years old and lives in New Mexico. He was part of a group of men who served in the same unit as Jim. He misspelled his name, but Jim was able to figure it out. Jim and his family were very happy to hear from him.

Reunited Memories
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.

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
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 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 I walked around the house sucking my throbbing finger, finally arriving at the stairway. The telephone!

Here's a poem that volunteer Ken Pratt found on the inside back cover of an 1888 stock-owners ledger from the Rocky Mountain Bell Telephone Company of Salt Lake City, UT.

It is signed H. A. Culmer:

Thoughts that flash
Mystic wires and Bells
"O'er craggy peaks
And flowery dells"

Wow! We don't have shareholders who rhapsodize about the business like that anymore.

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 1800's 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 1906, my father called from his place of work and put 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, "Main Gott, es spricht Deutsch!"
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 soothe 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
Alexander Graham Bell filed for a 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, March 10, 1876, that the first intelligible sentence was transmitted by telephone. The words, "Watson, come here; I want you," were 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."

March 10, 1876. What day of the week was it? The first reader to call (303)-296-1221, e-mail (telebhist@aol.com) or mail the correct answer, will receive a surprise! New Contest!

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. "Please do," she said. "Just ask for Sally." Three months later, I was back in Seattle. A different voice answered, "Information Please." "Are you a friend?" I asked. "Yes - a very old friend," she said. "Well, I just wanted to have a talk with you," 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.
Telecommunications History Group
P.O. Box 8719
Denver, CO 80201-8719