

# Dial Log



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Jody Georgeson, Editor

## Director's Report

We're can hardly wait for Spring to arrive. In many parts of the country, we've already had spring-like weather, but we know Mother Nature may have some tricks left up her sleeve for us! Once again this year, we will be giving tours of the historic Mountain States building during Doors Open Denver weekend, April 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. See their web site for more information. <http://www.denvergov.org/docx/DenverOfficeofCulturalAffairs/DoorsOpenDenver/>

We've been doing some Spring cleaning. A volunteer crew spent the day recently at the Lakewood, CO CenturyLink Training Center, where we refurbished our displays. These used to be in lobby of the 1005 17<sup>th</sup> Street.

Our museum in the 931 14<sup>th</sup> Street building has been closed for a few months, while construction was being completed on the floor above us. So another day was spent cleaning and rearranging that museum. All of our displays are in tip-top shape, now, so this would be

a very good time to bring your friends and family for a tour!

The Seattle Museum of Communications has expanded its hours to include Sundays. They have already had nearly 50 Sunday visitors and expect more as word gets around. If you are in or around Seattle, be sure to visit. The Museum is still open on Tuesdays, as always.

Thanks to many of you, dear members, our Endowment fund continues to grow. We have over \$700,000 in the fund to date, with more in pledges, to be realized later. Our membership response continues to grow as well. If you haven't either renewed your membership, or contributed to the endowment fund, please consider doing so soon. Doing either (or both!) will ensure that you continue to receive the *Dial-Log*.



## Women's History Month

CenturyLink Women's group held a special event on March 18th in honor of Women's History Month. It was held in the MST&T headquarters building on the historically preserved 14<sup>th</sup> floor, and included THG displays and museum tours. We also produced a women-oriented timeline and outline of historical interest. A lap-top in the boardroom had links to our virtual museum tour of the 931 building.

**Jo Lynne Whiting** (THG board member) and **Brenda Snyder** gave a fascinating talk about the history of the women's organization from its start in 1979 at Mountain Bell, and its evolution through U S West, Qwest, and now CenturyLink.

I thought you'd enjoy some highlights from the history of women in the phone company:

### Operators

- First operators were young men, given to rough-housing and foul language.
- Women were hired because they

were more patient, pleasant and helpful.

- It was one of the first employment opportunities for women. Others were:
  - Domestic help
  - Teachers
  - Telegraph operators
- The Company became in-loco-parentis, so that parents would allow their daughters to work:
  - Lounges with matrons
  - Classes on health and deportment
  - Could not come to or leave work with a man
  - Dresscodes/fashion advice
  - Married women not eligible to work at company locations (married women *could* operate switch boards in their own homes)
  - Chief operator was "house mother"
- Women in the company were commonly referred to as "girls" until the 1970s



- Men began to be hired as operators after the 1973 Consent Decree.



Mike Lewis, Davenport Operator, 1975

### Women in Management

- 1935 - **Madge Ulrich**, Glendale, AZ; was the 1<sup>st</sup> female manager in the Bell System
- In most cases, women managers were confined to the Commercial, Human Resources and Admin. Services Departments until the 1970s.
- Statistics published in 1969 by the EEOC showed that 55% of Bell's work force was female, but a woman had only a 1 in 300 chance of being promoted to middle management (a white male's chances were 1 in 4.5).
- From 1959 until 1970, Mountain Bell's Initial Management Development Program (IMDP) was open only to men. AT&T's special assessment center for

women was seen as a token, since the companies had done nothing to prepare women for management assignments, so few were successful.

- The 1973 Consent Decree allowed women to apply for "non-traditional jobs" such as installer, cable splicer, utility clerk, driver, etc., and to move up the ranks into management in Plant and other traditionally all male departments. (**Ruthann Lundering** was the 1<sup>st</sup> female service foreman)
- 1977 - **Blanche T. Cowperthwaite** became Mountain Bell's 1<sup>st</sup> female director. A hook was put under the table in the Board Room for her to hang her purse.
- 1979 - Women in Management (WIM) was formed in Denver at Mountain Bell - **Sandy (Branson) Nance** was elected 1<sup>st</sup> president. Groups in Phoenix and Albuquerque soon followed. The organization became U S West Women, including all women employees.
- 1979 - **Connie Bragg** became Mountain Bell's 1<sup>st</sup> female department head (Operator Services)
- 1986 - **George Ann Harding** becomes Mountain Bell's 1<sup>st</sup> female officer (VP Wyoming)

### Women Heroes

- 233 American women served as operators in France, some close to enemy lines, during WWI. Others filled in for male telephone company employees here at home. When the troops returned, these women went back to being "the girls" at the switchboard.

- **Bea Coucher**, chief operator in Missoula, IBEW rep for the Rocky Mountain region in the 1920s – was the highest-ranking woman in the nation’s labor movement at the time. She led strikes in NY and Chicago, though not in the Mountain States.
- **Susan Parks**; 1916; Columbus, NM Mrs. Parks notified General Pershing of Pancho Villa’s attack and kept at her switchboard as bullets flew. The board, with bullet holes, is now in the Albuquerque telephone museum.
- **Mildred (Millie) Lothrop**; 1920 & 1940; Homer, NE – Twice in 20 years, Millie saved lives as the Omaha Creek flooded.



- **Etta Willcox**; 1921; Williams, IA - Bank robbers cut all the telephone and telegraph lines into town, so night manager Willcox drove to a town 5 miles away to notify police.
- **Sally Rooke**; 1908; Des Moines Telephone Company; Folsom, New Mexico – Sally died at her

switchboard while warning her neighbors to flee the flood waters of the Dry Cimarron creek.

### **My Personal Favorite**

*By D.J. (Don) Ostrand, Curator  
the Museum of Communications*

I've been asked to write a brief story about a favorite, artifact in the museum. Now that should be a snap, but wait -- that's not so easy after all.

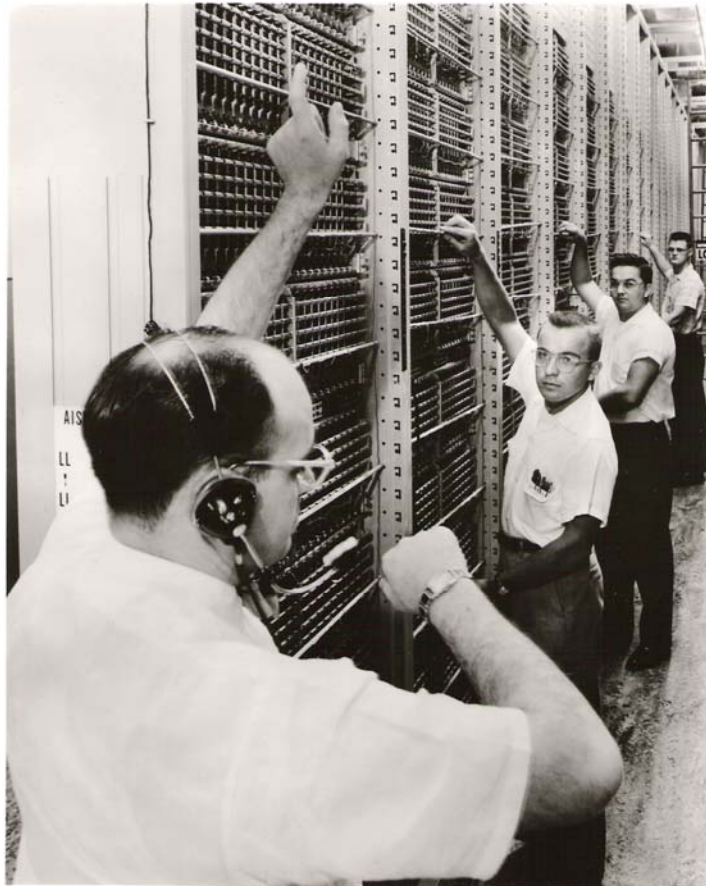
Having been involved with the Museum of Communications in Seattle since 1984/85, I've seen the collection grow to an enormous size. Selection of a single item, with so many to choose from, is difficult at best.

Realizing that telephone service is based on what we called "central" in the old days, maybe some part of the central office switching equipment should be my favorite. We have plenty items to consider: the operational Panel Switch (sole surviving unit known to exist), the #5 XBAR (cross bar) would be good and something I worked in for part of my career; maybe the #1 XBAR as I really lack experience in that technology; I love the step switch equipment and the CX100 equipment with its 10-party lines. Without "central" there would be no need for the rest of our industry.

Then I think of the rattling noise of working Teletype Machines (TTY) and they bring back memories. And the "Key and Sounder" circuits that only existed in the movies for me, but were an important means of communications.

But wait -- we have a good display of telephone sets from beautifully polished-wood wall phones to candlesticks, to desk sets and coin phones. Maybe our Silver Dollar Coin Phone or the 11-digit dial Strowger potbelly desk stand or our collection of colored model 302 sets (we are missing only the blue set), or maybe it would be Ted Hewitt's Timbuktu collection with a working model 105 magneto switchboard.

The simulated "manhole", underground cable ducts, aerial cable and open wire lead complete with poles, cross-arms, insulators and drop wires carrying working circuits from a magneto



switchboard. Turning the crank on a wooden wall phone and hearing bells ring across the room. Is the basic telephone circuit my favorite or maybe the new fiber optics?

As I mentally go through the museum we have a Plant Service Center (PSC). When a customer called the "business office (BO)" to order service, a service order was written and transmitted via a TTY

network to the PSC. Here the service was assigned a telephone number (if not pre-assigned by the BO), determine the cable and pair or wires that extend from central to the service address, and assign the central office equipment. With those added to the service order, it was distributed to the central office and installation crew for action. Once the

service was installed the repair service and Local Test Desk (LTD) retained a copy of the service order in file as an "as built" record if repairs were necessary. The PSC transmitted a copy of the completed service order over the completion network to the billing office to start the billing

process. Our replica PSC is a rare item, (I worked in a real one). Could it be my favorite?

I like our displays of business "on premise" equipment, too. If customers had more than one line the company installed a "key system" or a PBX ("private business exchange"). The collection displays working models of both. Either type of "on-premise" equipment allowed



multiple users to access incoming calls and make outgoing calls, as well as connect to internal services utilizing fewer central office lines.

Our working secretarial switchboard and concentrator/identifier were key elements in providing secretarial answering services.

What about gadgets? Maybe one of our Bellboy pagers; they were introduced to the world at the 1962 Seattle World's Fair. The collection of glass insulators sparkle and shine in their display case. There is a copy of an AT&T annual report in Braille. It might be our collection of Western Electric consumer products like the fan and washing machine. The 1955 International R-140 Line Truck we are restoring should also be in the running.

You can see my dilemma by visiting [www.museumofcommunications.org](http://www.museumofcommunications.org). So many items to pick from makes it extremely hard to choose just one.

I realize my very favorite item is not a single item. It is the entire crew that has been so dedicated over all 27 years of our museum involvement. The talent each volunteer has brought, the friendships, the challenges we have faced together and conquered, and the world class museum we have built here in Seattle, Washington is a fascinating picture of our telecommunications heritage. Thank you ladies and gentlemen for all your volunteer time, for your devotion and for the treasure you have built, the Museum of Communications. It is obvious that you care for and take pride in the museum, as much as I do.

## Leadville, Colorado's Famous Phone Number

by Marty Donovan

You never know what you might dig up at The Telecommunications History Group. The archives and museums are full of all kinds of documents and artifacts ranging from the beginnings of telephone usage to modern day telecommunications.

A while back I was researching phone numbers in the 1891 Colorado Telephone Company directory and I came across a listing for H. A. W. Tabor's famous silver mine, the Matchless.

That captured my interest, so I delved into the history of the town's telephone company. The Leadville exchange was established in 1879 by Western Union Telegraph Company, but soon came under the ownership of the H. A. W. Tabor, who renamed it the Leadville Telephone Company, according to the *History of Leadville and Lake County, Colorado*.



H.A.W. Tabor

Tabor had lines installed between the Matchless office and the silver mine in the mountains nearby. This enabled him to stay in contact with his miners, a convenience which seemed beyond its time.

The Leadville Telephone Company bragged that more telephone calls were made during any given day than any exchange of its size in the United States. The number of business transactions and the ambitions of Leadville's residents contributed to the large volume of calls made in the area.

According to THG's website, the Leadville Telephone Company. In 1888, the Colorado Telephone Company purchased the Leadville outfit. The plan was to connect telephone lines from Leadville to Denver. Lines had to be placed over Mosquito Pass, but none had ever been installed at such a high altitude, 13,180 feet. This endeavor was attempted three times and finally worked on the last try. The connection was functional, but not particularly satisfactory to parties attempting to converse between the two cities.

Telephone engineers learned from the experience and designed the heavy-duty "H" fixture, which provided a much better connection between Leadville and Denver.

The Colorado Telephone Company grew its business and established lines in cities throughout Colorado and New Mexico. In 1911, the Colorado, Tri-States and Rocky Mountain Bell Telephone Companies combined to form Mountain States Telephone & Telegraph Company.

H. A. W. Tabor gave most of his stock in the Leadville Telephone Company to his first wife Augusta, in a divorce settlement. He continued to run the Matchless Mine with his new wife, "Baby Doe," and the couple enjoyed a lavish lifestyle until the silver panic of 1893, when they lost most of their fortune. One of Tabor's last instructions to Baby Doe before his death in 1899 was to "hold on to the Matchless." She was found frozen to death in 1935 at an abandoned cabin nearby.

In case you were wondering, the telephone listing for the Matchless Mine in THG's 1891 phone book is #69.

This is one of many interesting finds at the Telecommunications History Group. Whether you are researching genealogical or historical information in our archives, or you would like to tour the museums, THG can enrich your understanding of the industry and how telecommunications changes our lives and our world.

## **The Emergency Telephone: Some Memories**

By Don Warsavage



*Don Warsavage with the emergency telephone on Longs Peak (taken by Fred Rickauer)*

It was the summer of 1963 at four a.m. when **Fred Rickauer** (retired) mounted the horse assigned to him. Rickauer was a telephone installer-repairman on loan to Estes Park, Colorado. His telephone training had taught him how to climb poles, repair telephones and shoot trouble—but nothing about riding horses. Once Fred was in the saddle, his horse set off at a trot, bouncing him up and down and heading in the wrong direction. Rickauer was a gamer; hanging on, he shouted to his foreman, voice vibrating in rhythm, “How do I steer this thing?”

His foreman, however, was having troubles of his own. The horse he swung up on had over time earned the nickname “Snakepit,” and was trying to buck him off.

This was not an uncommon beginning to the 2½ hour trek to once again repair the emergency telephone located at The Boulder Field near the summit of Longs Peak. The horses shouldn’t be blamed for hating that seven mile trail. It was rocky and steep. It twisted its way up to around thirteen thousand feet above sea level. And if these horses sensed their riders’ inexperience, they tried for a different destination—back to the barn.

The telephone line itself was an intrusion on that beautiful, harsh environment. It was just a bracket circuit; a pair of wires strung on small, brittle poles that ran straight up the side of the mountain. It was frequently out of service; in winter because of fallen trees and drifting snow, in summer because of

recurring lightning storms; and there was always the wind.



*Image courtesy of the National Park Service, Rocky Mountain National Park. Digital image Gallery, JPG #12727.*

The genesis of this storied line began with a famous and tragic death. Back in January 1925, Agnes Vaille and her partner, Walter Keimer, made a grueling winter climb, reaching the 14,259 foot summit of Longs Peak. It was the first successful winter climb of Longs via the East Face. The weather worsened. There were high winds and sub-zero temperatures. Agnes slipped on their descent of the North Face and slid one hundred and fifty feet to the Boulder Field where she eventually died of exposure. Walter Keimer survived but with severe frostbite injuries. Herbert Sortland, a volunteer rescuer, lost his life in the rescue attempt.

The tragedy made headlines. Agnes Vaille was an accomplished mountain climber, Secretary of the Denver Chamber of Commerce and daughter of **Frederick O. Vaille**, the



man who started the first telephone company in Denver in 1879. That summer of 1925, the emergency telephone was established at the Boulder Field by the Rocky Mountain National Park, owner of the line back then.

The Rocky Mountain National Park maintained and repaired the line until 1962, when Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph contracted to take over the Longs Peak line along with all the other telephone lines in the Park.

**Gerry Kinney** (retired) was there from the beginning. He was the Telephone Exchange Manager from 1962 to 1968. In addition to Estes Park and the National Park telephone lines, his responsibility included the smaller communities of Peaceful Valley, Allens Park, Raymond, and Glen Haven; all in rugged mountainous terrain. The annual population surge of returning summer residents, tourists and business re-openings created an avalanche of telephone service demands. To help with this, Kinney borrowed people each year (like Fred Rickauer) from other areas to help out.

By 1963, Kinney had learned first hand the difficulties of servicing the Longs Peak line, while trying to balance all the other demands of the area. Already one of his crews had been caught in a lightning storm at the Boulder Field. The line itself was knocked out of service while the crew was returning down the mountain. Kinney had to be concerned about the safety of the people he sent up there, as well as the potential consequences of the

emergency phone being out of service.

Kinney planned a job to improve the electrical grounding of the emergency phone and thereby reduce the lightning-caused outages. He took two men with him - **Don Warsavage** (retired), and **Bill Willbanks** (recently deceased) - and horses up to the Boulder Field.



*Photo taken by Fred Rickauer*

Kinney recalled that it was starting to cloud up in a threatening way. They were preparing to leave and he was bringing the horses down the trail to meet the other two men. The horses became frightened and began pulling back. "I was pretty amazed at what I saw next," he said. "Warsavage was waving a copper ground rod around. As he did so, the top of the rod was making a blue-white arc in the air and it created a weird, electrical buzzing sound.

Wilbanks was running and his rather long curly black hair was standing straight up. His hands were making the same bluish arcs with each stride along with the buzzing sound." The three of them gathered at the end of the Boulder Field. They got the horses under control and led them down to timberline where, to

the men's relief, the only trouble was a pelting rain.

None of them had ever experienced such conditions before. It was believed they had encountered a rare phenomenon associated with electrical storms referred to as static discharge, corona discharge or St. Elmo's Fire.

It took a sizeable effort to keep that emergency phone in service for over forty years. It was done through the efforts of the people of The Rocky Mountain National Park and in later years, the repairmen of the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company. The phone was removed in the early seventies as the Park moved to more radio communications. The phone is gone, along with the insulators and all the miles of wire. Even all the poles are gone and the environment has been restored to its natural state.

The Rocky Mountain National Park is a beautiful gift for the people of the United States; it will reach its 100th anniversary in 2015. Longs Peak, the jewel of the Park, overlooks Estes Park and is a magnet for thousands of hikers and climbers. Those who cross the Boulder Field are likely to wonder at the awesome beauty of the peak at that altitude.

They are also likely to see a strange looking beehive shaped stone hut near the trail. It is the Agnes Vaille Memorial.

There have been many adventures on Longs Peak, most of them exciting and rewarding, some dangerous and frightening, and some tragic. It is fair to conclude that the emergency shelter hut and

the emergency telephone played a helpful role in some of those stories.



Shelter Cabin built in 1927, funded by the Vaille family.

## The Best Way To Pray

from Leah Be

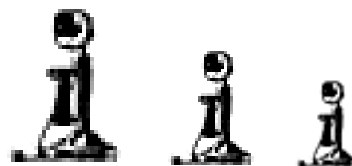
A priest, a minister and a guru sat discussing the best positions for prayer, while a telephone repairman worked nearby.

"Kneeling is definitely the best way to pray," the priest said.

"No," said the minister. "I get the best results standing with my hands outstretched to Heaven."

"You're both wrong," the guru said. "The most effective prayer position is lying down on the floor."

The repairman could contain himself no longer. "Hey, fellas," he interrupted. "The best prayin' I ever did was when I was hangin' upside down from a telephone pole."



## Spring Cleaning



Jerry Wild and Ron Swanson  
clean an exhibit case.

Jack Bol  
supervises.

