



Dial-Log



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first edition of Dial-Log, the Telecommunications History Group's quarterly newsletter. I (Herb Hackenburg) tend to write in an informal, "folksie" style, so the reader will see first person references, first names after a person's full name has been introduced and boldface names when members of the "History Group family" are mentioned.

Our letterhead comes from an employee newsletter used by the Mountain States Telephone & Telegraph Company in 1929 when the company's new Headquarters Building was opened. While the building contained executive and business offices, its main purpose was to house the switching equipment used to bring dial service to Denver.

Carol Baird is our editor, typesetter and subscription list supervisor. Carol and I hope you like Dial-Log and will feel free to contribute articles, story leads, criticisms and accolades.

BUSY, BOARD MEETING MOVES ON ALL FRONTS

We had a Board of Directors' meeting on May 15th in John Scully's (VP Colorado-U S WEST Communications) board room. John was kind enough to welcome our little group. Larry DeMuth, our new president, conducted the meeting. Board Members Joel Barker, John Darrow, DeMuth, Howard Doerr, John Felt, Eleanor Gehres, Monys Haegen, Robert Henderson, Sue Keesen, Mary Riffle, Chuck Simmons, Jim Travers were in attendance. Board Members Michael Flavin, John Herbolich, Walter Maulis, Audrey Hargrove and Joseph Pelton were absent. Visitors to the meeting included Leslie Young, Carol Baird, Ken Pratt and myself.

John Herbolich was conducting a class in Minneapolis, Walt was recovering from colon surgery, and Audrey was in an All-Hands-Meeting in Breckenridge and we don't know what happened to the Flavin/Pelton contingent from Boulder.

It was a brisk meeting and not even my spilling a full cup of coffee all over the conference table slowed things up. Various board committee chairpersons gave reports.

Reporting for her Program Committee, Eleanor stated that a major goal was to have the archiving of both the directory and photograph collections well under way by the end of the year. She also stated the archive seminar for volunteers should be conducted prior to the new school year beginning.

Howard reported for the Finance Committee and noted that our new fee system was in effect and that it wasn't too late to begin making grant applications. Eleanor suggested that grant applications for Colorado gambling tax money should be made by September. Jim and John (Darrow) are working on a software system to track the History Group's budget, income and outgo.

Sue reported for the Acquisition Committee and noted that the committee would soon be coming up with the various legal forms the History Group would need to accept acquisitions. This committee is also working on a more complete acquisition and deacquisition policy.

Bob reported for the Personnel Committee. Chuck is working with some associates at the University of Northern Colorado on job descriptions for some of our proposed staff positions. Bob also reported on a volunteer recognition program Mary is working on and a volunteer recruiting brochure which I'm working on and Mary will have produced.

Reporting on the Education Committee, Monys said that our initial effort should be to establish an intern program. Steps are being taken to begin this program this fall. Monys will pick an intern from Metro State. One of the three professional historians on the board (Monys, Joel, Eleanor) will serve as the intern's archival supervisor.

VOLUNTEER NEWS

Thanks to Board Member Audrey Hargrove, we hired Carol Baird as our secretary. Carol retired from U S WEST in 1990. Audrey said Carol was one of the best people who had ever worked for her and she was sorry to see her retire. In addition to her half-time job, Carol volunteers at least one hour a day when she serves as our Volunteer Coordinator. Frankly, I don't know how we functioned without her.

We held our first volunteer recruitment/recognition breakfast in April. All volunteers, except one, attended along with two guests. One spouse expressed some interest in becoming a volunteer.

We lost one volunteer, Will Ebeling, who moved to Sun City, Arizona. We added Lowell Todd, a Northwestern Bell retiree, who was working two to three days a week as our color photo archivist. Unfortunately, Lowell had a heart problem and is now recovering from a triple bypass.

We also added four "specialists volunteers" -- **Dave Spencer**, architectural historian and an expert on Denver through 1860 to 1920; **LeRoy Katz**, **Kurt Furness** and **Lynn Graves**, antique telephone collectors. **LeRoy** and **Lynn** work for U S WEST, while **Kurt** is a school principal. **Lynn** has made significant contributions to our collection of specialized phone company tools and helped us by helping us to buy two high-quality antique phones to replace phones AT&T recalled from our museum display.

Ken Pratt has finished shelving the directory collection and has nearly finished shelving the Bell System Practices collection. **Carol** is inputting the collections in our data base.

Jerry Butler has finished the initial phase of archiving our black and white photo collection, which means we can now locate specific photographs by file folder name.

Dale Norblom, **Ken** and I attended a day-long historic preservation seminar which was held at the Colorado Historic Society, Denver Public Library and the Denver Museum of Art. **Ken** and I went on to attend a special demonstration at the Rocky Mountain Restoration Center. We all agreed that it was an interesting and educational day.

NEW ACQUISITIONS

Thanks to Board Member **John Herbolich**, who is now a contract instructor at the U S WEST Training Center, we acquired nearly 200 telecommunications history and reference books from the Training Center's library which has been deactivated. The collection included 30-volume set of Christopher H. Sterling's Telecommunications; six of the top seven history books written about Alexander Graham Bell; A Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, with stand; and a \$300 book cart. Thank you, John.

Carol and I met with **Bill Morey**, who at the time was in charge of U S WEST's records storage. He is a dedicated, knowledgeable, hard-working young man with a keen sense of history. During our visit, **Carol** and I acquired a 386 PC, six boxes of photographs from Arizona and small box of material from the Rocky Mountain and Colorado Bell telephone companies. One item in the small box was a "broadside" from the Columbian Exposition promoting an English nonelectric telephone which none of our antique telephone experts had ever heard about. **Bill** also gave us a U S WEST Records Retention Manual and asked for our input on the new manual. Since our visit, **Bill** has been promoted and works for U S WEST, Inc.

JERRY SAIN YELLOW PAGES MEMORABILIA COLLECTION ARCHIVED

For years Jerry Sain was a district manager in Mountain Bell's Yellow Pages Department. He was with U S WEST when he retired in 1988.

Slightly built, with a quick wit and mind, Jerry was known by many as "that crazy little yellow pages (YP) promotions guy." Jerry designed directory covers, put together off-beat YP sales meetings and designed and/or purchased scores of YP giveaway items. Throughout his career, Jerry saved samples of his work and the work of others in the YP promotions business.

Recently, while recruiting possible volunteers for the History Group, VOLUNTEER Dale Norblom contacted his friend Jerry. Dale found that Jerry was fighting advanced cancer.

Jerry invited Dale and I to his home for a visit and to pick up his collection of YP memorabilia. A couple of days later, Dale and I were knocking on Jerry's front door. After Jerry's caretaker answered the door, we had to wait a few minutes for Jerry's pain pills to take effect.

Then, the old animated Jerry Sain began to reminiscence about some of his yellow pages shenanigans and going through the boxes of items in his collection. We took notes and taped most of the conversation. After about an hour, Jerry said he was winding down, so Dale and I repacked the boxes and brought them down to the history office.

As he was putting his Denver affairs in order, Jerry was attempting to move to Idaho where he could spend his remaining days with his son. John Perkins, a former Yellow Pages associate, offered to drive Jerry to Idaho, but Jerry's doctors said he wouldn't make it. Commercial air travel was also ruled out.

John then attempted to transport Jerry via the U S WEST corporate jet. John's initial request was turned down, but U S WEST Media Group President Chuck Lillis heard about the problem and asked Jerry to join him on a flight to Seattle with a newly scheduled stopover in Boise. Jerry's two daughters were also invited along. Jerry died in Idaho Wednesday, May 15. Thanks to a good friend and Chuck Lillis, Jerry's son and his two daughters were nearby when he passed on.

Ironically, May 15 was the day Dale Norblom finished archiving the Jerry Sain collection. The collection contains more than 200 individual items (circa 1929-1990), with everything from YP Swiss Army pocket knives and pocket mirrors to paper YP dresses and knit sweaters. Part of this collection will be displayed in the 1005 17th Street Museum soon.

VIP VISITORS

Public Broadcasting Service Producer Morgan Wesson and Alexander Graham Bell's great grandson, Edwin S. Grosvnor, spent four days researching in our archives. Morgan and Edwin are co-authoring a book, with the working title of Bell and the Telephone. The book is scheduled to come out around Bell's 150th birthday in March of 1997. Morgan is also an assistant producer for Far Speaking, an American Experience PBS special also to be broadcast in March. The two men have researched in the 20 top telecommunications archives in the country and were truly impressed by what we've accomplished and the material we have available.

HISTORY GROUP HOSTS TELECOMMUNICATIONS HISTORY GROUP SYMPOSIUM

On June 19, I, as general chairman, convened the Fourth International Symposium on Telecommunications History in the Auditorium of U S WEST's Denver Service Center. It was a small, but interesting gathering. There were 14 presenters and 17 participants.

History Group Board Member and Program Committee Chair **Eleanor Gehres** welcomed the group to Denver and did a magnificent (and honest) sales job for both the History Group and the Denver Public Library.

The keynote address, "The Tangled Web of Patent Number 174,465" was delivered by Dr. Russell A. Pizer, now teaching, after a 30-year Bell System career. The general gist of Russ's paper was that there was a lot of hanky-panky around A. G. Bell's patent, including a strong case for graft in the U.S. Patent office. Research shows that most of the "Tangled Web" was caused by Gardner Greene Hubard, Bell's politically connected father-in-law. After convincing Bell to give his wife (Hubard's daughter) all (except one) of his shares of American Bell Company stock (Bell received one-third of the original stock issue, George Sanders and Hubard held the remaining shares), Hubard sent his daughter and her new husband to Europe for an eighteen month honeymoon.

While Bell was away, lawyers Sanders and Hubard did what they had to do to secure the telephone patent and build the Bell Company. Considering the patent was awarded from blueprints that electronically would not support an operational machine, and before any kind of working telephone was built, and ignored a workable telephone design submitted for patent (by Antonio Meucci) nine years earlier, Russ concluded his paper by saying he didn't want to do any more research about the early days of "his" telephone company.

Since Russ is paying a handsome sum to have restoration specialists build a working model of the Meucci phone, one must conclude that

his tongue was planted firmly in his cheek when he made his closing statement.

Charley Pleasance, the holder of several telephone patents, former owner of a telephone equipment manufacturing company and a 40 year history of working with and for independent telephone companies, gave two papers. In his first paper, Charley discussed many of the interesting, strong-willed, cantankerous, zany, personalities he'd worked with during his career in the independent phone business.

By some freak of nature, when I lived in Ohio, I did some freelance work for one of these personalities and met two of the others. The one who kept a loaded gun in his right-hand desk drawer was odd. His desk was across the corner of a small office so no one could approach him from the back or either side. He was afraid his customers would take the really lousy phone service they were getting from his company too seriously.

Charley's second paper discussed the first automated switching (dial) system and why the Bell System didn't and couldn't have anything to do with it, even though they tried. By-the-way, one of the earliest examples of this Stroweger switching system in our area was installed in Albuquerque in 1894.

Board Member Joel Barker, who happens to be the director of the National Archives and Records Administration-Rocky Mountain Region, sent one of his archivists to tell the assembled historians what types of records and services the National Archives provide. Joan Howard was a delight!

Joan fulfilled her mission, then shared some of her experiences as an archivist for three presidential libraries. While she worked for the Eisenhower Library in Abilene, Kansas, she helped start up the National Independent Telephone Company Museum in Abilene. While she worked at the Nixon Library, Joan helped to transcribe the famous "Nixon Tapes." Joan also worked at the L. B. Johnson Library in Texas.

I conduct a tour of the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company Headquarters building. The group (plus an especially invited architectural historian) was enthralled with "The Last of the Bell System Palaces." The old building still has class, but could use some serious sprucing up.

Professor Richard Bellaver, from Ball State University, presented a paper on E. T. Gilliland, who invented an automatic switching machine even before Stroweger, but it was small and never worked very well. Gilliland did invent an eight-pound operator's headset, tinkered with mass-produced, interchangeable telephone apparatus parts and created an assembly line before Henry Ford did his thing.

Advanced telephone collector Dick Erickson kicked off the second day with a paper and a demonstration on early American pay phones and how they worked.

The whole gang then trooped down to the Denver Public Library, where director Raymond Clark showed the absolutely amazed historians the world's most advanced photo digitization project. Eleanor was also on hand to show off her fantastic Western History archives (the photo project is also part of her department).

Five more papers were presented in the last afternoon.

Penn State's John Rossi (a diplomatic historian) presented "Full and Free Communication Trans-Pacific Cable, radio and U. S. Diplomacy, 1919-1923". Basically, the paper concerned the island of Yap in the South Pacific. The island is of absolutely no use to anyone, except as a communications hub for trans-Pacific cables. As a result of losing World War I, Germany lost Yap to the victorious allies, specifically Japan. How the British, Dutch and the United States treated Japan and Japan treated them over Yap may have provided some of the early tinder in the Pacific in World War II.

Antique telephone expert and collector (and History Group volunteer), Georg Ek, presented a paper on the first use of the telephone to transmit cardiac data transmission. In 1958, Dr. Eugene Porter Montgomery transmitted EKG's over the telephone across the desolate eastern plains of Colorado. While Dr. Montgomery was saving lives, Mountain Bell and the rest of the Bell System was fighting him every inch of the way. It had to do with FCC regulations concerning "foreign attachments" to the telephone network.

Indiana University's Charles Twardy presented "The Ubiquitous, Elusive Vander Weyde and His Telephone." This paper was about another inventor who said he invented the phone before A. G. Bell. He claims to have demonstrated a working model in New York City in 1869. Since Vander Weyde was the editor of a popular technical journal, Manufacturer and Builder, he was hard to ignore. He also published articles in the Scientific American and several other technical journals. Strangely, some of Weyde's articles praised Bell, others chastised him. Eventually, Vander Weyde seems to have disappeared completely from the pages of history.

Laura Watson, museum administrator, Canadian Forces Communications and Electronic Museum, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, presented, "Living a Legend in Aklavik, the Life and Times of Frank Riddell." This is a delightful story of a young recruit in "Signals"-- as the Canadians call their Signal Corps -- who helps build and maintain a communications system in Aklavik, just south of the Arctic Circle. Along the way, this unassuming, nebish-like little man: learns to speak a plethora of native dialects; becomes a crack rifle shot;

saves his fellow signal mates from freezing a number of times; becomes a world renown expert in arctic survival (hired by Western Electric and the U. S. Air Force as a consultant for the DEW Line project); tracks down a killer in the Canadian Rockies (a movie starring Charles Bronson was made of this exploit and Hollywood transformed Riddell into a Mountie); establishes a region-wide reputation as a Lothario; and, rather late in life, marries. He retired to a quiet life in Ottawa, and died a few years ago at nearly 90 years of age.

Junius Rodriguez, Eureka College, is a native of southwestern Louisiana, and demonstrates his Creole heritage by cooking fine gumbo and jambalaya for his history students in Eureka, Illinois. "I moved from the 'Heart of Dixie' to the 'Land of Lincoln', which gives me an interesting perspective of the nation's history," he says. His paper, "Galvanized Resistance: Telegraphic Communications and the Development of Southern Anti-Technology Mentality" was an interesting thesis on which to close the symposium.

Junius' central thrust is contained in the paper's opening paragraph: "Newt Gingrich...believes that today's information revolution holds limitless possibilities for redefining citizen-participation... Such grandiose visions rest upon the assumption that society embraces new technologies and willingly modifies itself to accept... innovation... Yet the realities of human nature, with its strong desire to rest upon the familiar, make the adoption of such technological transfers more difficult. Accordingly, resistance to innovation and suspicion of technological change slow the pace of acceptance by encouraging an intellectual cost analysis of the blessings and burdens of progress."

To illustrate his point, Junius discusses the telegraph. "Morse's invention of the telegraph in 1844 positioned a new type of communication into a society struggling to find a unified national voice... The Albany Argus predicted that this innovation would 'render our people one family,' and speculated that 'our brethren in Louisiana will receive intelligence from their brethren in New York...almost as quick as if they were seated around the same board...'. Unfortunately, such cheery assessments of the impending brotherhood of man belie the realities of antebellum life."

Junius uses several examples to prove his point--many concern reports about the South's slave-based society being telegraphed to Northern newspapers for publication. He also conjectures that the increase of slave revolts in the 1840s and 1850s might be the result of "not only from heightened social and political tension, but also from resourceful improvements in news acquisition (the telegraph)." All this turmoil to their way of life cause many southerners to distrust and dislike the telegraph and to censor

their newspapers and/or cause them to publish idyllic versions of the lives of the South's "servile population."

George Howard, program chairman, antique telephone collector and New York judge, wrapped up the symposium with some excellent verbal applause for the symposium's participants and stated that he honestly felt the Fourth Symposium was the most interesting, the most educational and the best run of all--and he's attended them all. He also thanked the Telecommunications History Group for all of its work in hosting the event.

Feedback from presenters and participants after the two-day symposium was extremely positive. Historians and/or staff members from Lucent Technologies, Washington State University, University of Denver, Colorado Council of Higher Education, the FCC and the Smithsonian expressed regrets that they did not hear of the symposium in time to present papers and requested special notification if and when the next "Call for Papers" is issued.

HISTORY GROUP PULLS IN A FEW BUCKS

After the two-day telecommunications history symposium, the Telephone Collectors International (TCI), held their annual two-day national show in the lobby of the U S WEST Denver Service Center. Nearly 90 collectors from across the nation displayed their collections of antique phones and telephone memorabilia--some for show, others for sale.

The History Group purchased three new resource books, had several pieces of our telephone collection reidentified and finally got the word about our odd, pink insulator--we'll talk about it in the next newsletter, but it's rare and worth some money.

The TCI holds an auction at the end of its show every year. The History Group, with the help of Denver's TCI members (especially Georg Ek), assembled and offered 12 "telephone collectors resource books", at the auction. Each book was unique and contained material unavailable anywhere else in the world. We also sold a couple of my history books and received a nice donation. In total, the History Group made \$1,230 from the TCI show. More important, between the symposium and TCI show, we made solid contacts and friends all over the United States and Canada.

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