

Dial-Log



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Director's Report

By Jody Georgeson

From voice over internet to Skyping and texting, the telephone industry is changing dramatically. We've been reminded of this recently when we hear the reactions of visitors to our exhibit at the Denver Public Library. The children, particularly, are fascinated by dial phones, switchboards, and the concept of a time without telephones at all. To the older crowd, some of the new technologies and the variety of devices seem almost incomprehensible. Man continues to find new and better ways to meet our need to communicate with one another.

The exhibit has been a big project, and we're still catching our collective breath. We've now turned our attention to a drive to build our endowment fund so that THG can become self-sustaining. We appreciate the support that you continue to give us – we couldn't operate without our loyal members. But we still need to acquire funding from outside sources; that's a tough job in this economic climate. I remind you that you can reap tax benefits from donations to a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, from your

IRA. Check with your accountant or IRA manager to see if this can be of benefit to you.

Summer is a time for travel and get-togethers with family. If any of our far-flung THG family is going to be near Denver or Seattle, we hope you'll give us a call and come visit us. We're always eager to meet members of THG, and to swap stories with old friends.

It has been our pleasure to host tours for a number of organizations recently. The board of the retiree association (AUSWR) held its monthly meeting here in May, followed by a tour of the archives. We gave a tour to Emerging Museum Curators earlier this month; it was a pleasure to meet such eager young professionals who will be carrying on the business of preserving the past.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the *Dial-Log*. I thank all my contributors who make putting it together a piece of cake!



Tribute to a Telephone Man

by Laurence W. DeMuth, Jr.

Larry gave the following tribute at the opening reception for our Denver Public Library exhibit.



Robert K. Timothy

To appreciate and understand history requires knowledge of the individuals who participated in and made that history.

The exhibit that brings us here, “smoke to text, what’s next” would not be complete without reference to at least one individual who has contributed a great deal to the evolution of the communications industry.

That individual is **Robert K. Timothy**, the retired president of The Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company, whom we honor this evening.

A brief description of the contributions that Bob has made in advancing the way in which we communicate will confirm why he is so much a part of the history we celebrate.

When Captain Bob Timothy returned from serving with the army in the Southwest Pacific at the end of World War II, he found a job with the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company. As a Commercial Representative in Greeley his main responsibility was to collect coins from public pay telephones.

After succeeding in that and other endeavors, he was promoted and transferred to Colorado Springs where he found himself Mountain Bell’s primary representative in dealing with the military that had just decided to transfer the headquarters of the North American Air Defense Command to that City.

A completely new and unique communications system had to be designed and installed, first at the air base and then in Cheyenne Mountain. Bob Timothy designed and supervised the installation on both of these successful projects.

He also was the one who designed and supervised the installation of the telephone system for the Air Force Academy. The design was the first of its kind, and a model for communications systems that were to follow.

Time does not permit a description of Bob’s whole career with the Bell System, but when he became President of Mountain Bell on January 1, 1970, he was faced with the necessity of improving telephone service, particularly in Colorado, and at the same time raising the prices of the Company’s services.

His success in accomplishing these two monumental tasks contributed to his being asked by the Bell System presidents to present a paper outlining the rate of return necessary for all Bell System operating companies to achieve.

Bob retired in June, 1983, just six months before Judge Greene’s decree broke up the Bell System; but Bob continued his involvement in



Cadets at the U. S. Air Force Academy

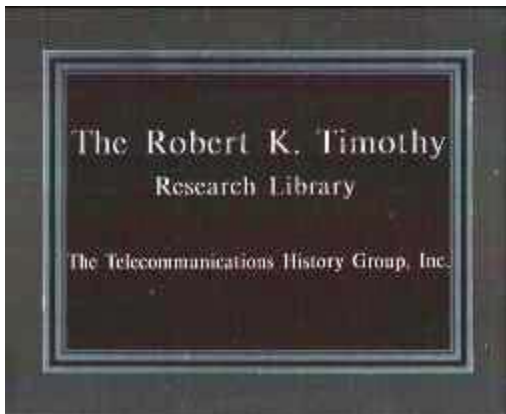
community activities and was a valued member on numerous boards of directors [including THG's] for many years.

In addition to these and other outstanding achievements, the most important aspect of our honoree's contribution to history can be found in what those who worked with and for him say about that experience.

Universally and unanimously, those know Bob and who have worked with him report that Bob Timothy is one of the great traditional managers; he knew not only the importance of those who worked for the Company but also knew how to work with them. He is a real leader and a real gentleman.

That is the type of individual who makes history meaningful, and that is the type of history that is important for success in the future.

To honor Bob and his accomplishments, the Board of the Telecommunications History Group has named the research library at the History Group's headquarters location, The Robert K. Timothy Research Library.



We know how many plaques you have received, Bob. They are rarely seen by the public. Now your name will be seen by all who visit our archives, and we present you this picture of the door to the library to prove what we have done.

Thank you, Bob, for all that you have contributed over the years.

Great Aunt Rena Ward

by Shirley Ward Mullen



After doing some research and locating your website, I am forwarding the attached photo from our family album. My great aunt, Rena Ward, is third from the left in the photo. This was taken in Green River, Wyoming some time in the 1910 to 1915 timeframe. She was about 17 years old at the time.

I had the pleasure of meeting her a few times in her elder years, and she was quite the lady. As background, she was born in 1883. She herself had an interest in history and keeping records about Green River. I recently visited her son (who gave me the photo), and he brought out a large stack of long, narrow notebooks neatly rubber-banded together. He told me that whenever anything of note happened in Green River, i.e. births, deaths, marriages, divorces, and I guess the gossip of the day, she recorded it in the notebooks. I didn't have time to look at them when I visited, but will take a look the next time I'm there. If I took the time I'm sure I would find some writings about her time at Mountain Telephone & Telegraph. I guess she was a journalist at heart!

I am a 20-year employee of AT&T (formerly Pacific Telesis Group) in San Francisco, CA. I had no idea that my family goes so far back in the AT&T family of companies! By the way, my Great-Aunt Rena would be very proud to know that her photo as a switchboard operator has a home in your museum.

A Re-Birth Announcement

by Herb Hackenburg

It was a rebirth announcement of sorts. Not a big article -- a single column under a large headline, "Friday 29;" just three lines of type:

ABILENE Antique Telephone
Show and Sale. 9 a.m.-3p.m.
Sterl Hall, 619 Rogers. 825-0578

I was in my normal Friday morning routine, after working out at the "Y," cooling down by eating a late breakfast of toast and old-fashioned peanut butter, coffee and a glass of OJ. I also read my *Salina Journal* and do the SA DU KO puzzle.

On this morning, my eye caught the words, "antique telephone" in the paper's "A Look Ahead" column. "Jerry Williams had pulled it off," I thought to myself. "Today is Friday, April 29th and I'd better get off my duff and get over to Abilene."

From the 1960s to the '90s, the Antique Telephone Collectors Association (ATCA) members from all over the United States would meet once a year in Abilene to buy and sell old telephones and anything else that had anything to do with telecommunications. They'd meet friends, swap lies, and have a banquet and a drink or two. The Telecommunications History Group joined the party fairly late in the game, but we managed to bring a car-load of stuff to sell.

Georg Ek and I would get to Abilene a day early and help Peg Chronister -- a former chief operator for United Telephone, and the administrator for both the ATCA and Abilene's Independent Telephone Company Telephone Museum -- set up the antique telephone sale in Sterl Hall at the Dickenson County Fairgrounds. Let me tell you, you haven't lived until you've moved a PBX out of a barn haymow on a high-humidity, 90° day. Anyway, Georg and I had a good time and made a few bucks for THG.

Then E-Bay happened.

Antique telephone collectors from all over the world could buy and sell telephones, insulators, Bell paperweights, porcelain signs, BSPs, stock certificates, fobs, etc. over the Internet in minutes. Attendance at the Abilene sale dropped drastically and then the show stopped.



Jerry Williams is from Salina, Kansas, 20 minutes west of Abilene. Jerry's been collecting antique phones for decades. He did the E-Bay thing, but he missed the personal interaction and socialization of the old way of doing business. Three years ago he decided to stop grumping about E-Bay and resurrect the antique telephone sale. Jerry, with the help of his wife Barbara, held the sale in Salina. All the members of ACTA were invited, but not very many made it to Salina the first year -- or the second year. Jerry thought he'd give the telephone sale one more shot, but hold it in Abilene, its old home.



Things had changed in Abilene; Peg Chronister had passed away, and Nextel no longer supported the Independent Telephone Museum. On the other hand, Abilene had a couple of new motels, an excellent “new” family-style chicken dinner restaurant and Sterl Hall was still available at the fairgrounds.

I moved my duff to Abilene, getting to Sterl Hall just after lunch. The show was winding down, but the hall was full of displays and business was going on. According to Jerry, there were 48 dealers and 76 tables full of merchandise. There were collectors from 13 states as far east as New York, as far west as Utah, as far north as Minnesota and as far south as Texas.



Gene spent 30 years with the Grand River Mutual Telephone Company in Princeton. He began as an installer and retired as the chief purchasing agent.

Jerry Williams spent his 30-year career with Southwestern Bell. “When I started, I was part of AT&T’s Bell System, then the Bell System went away and when I retired, it was from AT&T, but I never left SWB. Go figure.”

Jerry also declared the 2011 ACTA Spring Show to be a success, and the 2012 show will be held in Abilene near the end of April.



I talked to Gene and Twyla Coon from Princeton, MO. Their Telephone Junction Company had made some sales. They both had fond memories of the many years they came to Abilene.

“It was wonderful seeing so many old friends again, and there were some new younger dealers, too,” Gene said. Twyla added, “It’s good to see some old friends, but I wish more collectors had come. I miss some of those Californians and there was no one here from the Lincoln Telephone Company.”



IN MEMORY

Hazel E. Mertz (Rensink), 85, of Phoenix, AZ, formerly of Denver, died on June 22, 2011. Hazel was preceded in death by her first husband of nearly 50 years, Wayne Mertz and Marion Rensink, her husband of 11 years. Wayne also worked at the phone company.

Hazel was born in Denver on December 26, 1925, and graduated from the University of Colorado. She worked at Mountain Bell for over thirty years and served as personal secretary to four presidents of Mountain Bell (Koch, Wingert, Timothy and Blanz).

Hazel was a long-time member of THG and generously shared her knowledge of the company and of the telephone industry. We will miss her knowledge, perspective and her humor.



Ralph Edward Wadley passed away on Thursday Feb. 10, 2011. He was born on April 23, 1920 in Fowler, CO. He graduated from East High School in Denver, CO, after which he enlisted into the military. Upon returning home he started working for Mountain Bell as a janitor and quickly moved up the corporate ladder. Ralph retired from Mountain Bell in 1979 as the General Manager for Customer Services. His son and daughter-in-law, **Jim and Laurel Wadley**, are both retired from U S West and are members in good standing of THG.



Denver Public Library Exhibit and Reception



THG President Jack Shea gives the opening address

As you may know, THG recently opened an exhibit at the Denver Public library, examining the history of telecommunications in Colorado.

The opening reception was attended by local historians, business leaders and government officials. After Denver City Librarian Shirley Amore welcomed everyone to the library, THG President **Jack Shea** explained the background and purpose of the exhibit. This was followed by remarks from **Scott Russell** (CenturyLink), **Valerie Malloy** (CBM of America), and **Linda Alvarado** (Board of Directors, U S West and Qwest).

After Mr. DeMuth's presentation to Mr. Timothy, Denver City Auditor **Dennis Gallagher** and historian **Tom Noel** led tours of the display.

The exhibit will run through September 30, 2011 at the Main Denver Public Library, located at 10 West 14th Avenue (14th and Broadway).

We hope you can visit the library and take a tour into the past. You'll get a feeling of what life was like before the telephone by sending a telegraph message just as the pioneers did so long ago. Or, if you are feeling more modern, you may place a call with two friends operating our antique switchboard, or see how the step switch works when dialing a phone.

If you can't visit, we have provided an on-line virtual tour. Go to www.telcomhistory.org and click on Virtual Museum.



ME AND ATTIS

By John Swartley

I had transferred to a different state, to different departments and towns in my telephone career so when I reported to work the first day of January 1984, I was ready for another change in my career. That day was my first as an AT&T Information System Technician better known as ATTIS. I am not sure I was ready for such a big change but I knew the telecommunication industry was changing daily and that I had to change with it or get left behind. For the next six years I went on quite a wild ride that was exciting, but sometimes the thought of going back to the line crew sounded like a good idea--not that it was an option.

At the time, I was in Montrose, Colorado and my new supervisor was located in Grand Junction, 60 miles away. To add to the confusion, I believe our dispatch center was in Boulder. Our new leaders wanted to project the image of ATTIS as a very professional operation. As we moved into our new office suite, we were informed that now we had to wear slacks, white shirt and tie. I do not remember them helping to pay for all the new clothes; they did buy us a nice pair of blue coveralls in case we needed them. I believe the brain trust in New Jersey Headquarters assumed all we had to do was walk into a clean office, plug in a phone and leave. I hate to admit that I really did feel more professional and enjoyed the cat calls from my female clients.

Once I had a case of trouble on the ski mountain and, after completing my assignment, I skied down in my blue coveralls, white shirt and tie. I got several comments which were fun. We still had to crawl under buildings and work in dirty conditions. Gradually, we dropped the slacks for blue jeans, lost the tie and went back to our old ways of dress. I enjoyed

the feeling for a while, but it just did not work at that time.

As the years passed and customers contracted with others to do their wiring, we lost most of the residential customers. The white shirts and ties might have worked with the business customers.

The next big change was giving up our large company vans for little Chrysler K Cars. They issued us a fold up ladder that I could hardly lift and a rack for the little car. (Rumor had it that AT&T bought so many K Cars, that it saved the Chrysler Corporation from bankruptcy in 1984.) The company had most of our equipment shipped directly to the customer which helped a lot.



We were issued green American Express credit cards which very few places accepted at the time, though they proved useful as time went by. To keep our image, we were encouraged to stay in the nicer motels when we were on the road. They never questioned our meal expense as long as there were no alcoholic drinks included. One day I received a letter informing me I could not charge movies to my motel bill. I had no idea what they were talking about until the next time I went to Denver and realized you could watch X rated movies in the motels at great expense.

ATTIS was a new company in a very competitive industry, and they were watching the so called "bottom line". There was no overtime and we had to start keeping an inventory of all the equipment we used or didn't use. The inventory made sense to me as I thought of all \$100's of dollars of equipment we left on the customers site

just so we would not have walk back to the truck. The no overtime rule was hard because a lot of my work was still in Telluride; that required three hours of driving every day.

The company came up with a modem terminal equipped with key board. We were supposed to use this unit to pass the orders we had worked. In a perfect world, their theory was to pass each order at the customer's site before we left. We all had such a hard time getting orders passed that we did not like to take the time and usually did it on our own time at the office. It was a nightmare. We started mastering the terminal in time, but after a couple of years they discontinued it and we returned to calling the dispatcher.

We were no longer a monopoly and many of our customers left us for other business telephone companies that were springing up all over. The telephone men that had enough to time to retire were taking the buyout package AT&T offered. There were only two of us left in Montrose out of the original four men. I also believe there were only two people left in Grand Junction and one person in Gunnison. All of the sudden I was using the green AT&T American Express more and more to help cover other areas when needed.

I was one of the last technicians that had PBX training in this part of the world. I found myself working in Grand Junction, Durango, Meeker, Alamosa, and once in a while in Montrose. By now our supervisor was gone from Grand Junction and our new one was located in Colorado Springs.

Even with the downsizing of employees we sometimes still had a hard

time keeping busy. How things had changed. I spent time working in Colorado Springs, as far east as La Junta in eastern Colorado, and south to Farmington, New Mexico. My K Car and I racked up a lot of miles and a lot of motel points, which my wife and I enjoyed later. I am not sure when, but they replaced my K Car with a Dodge Caravan -- a big improvement.

While there were still two of us in Montrose, and when the work slowed, I spent a lot of time doing maintenance on the old 701 PBX that still served the Western State College in Gunnison. At times I would stay in the resort area of Crested Butte where the motel had the best beer battered shrimp I have ever eaten.

My supervisor sent me to Colorado Springs one week to help change out payphones. AT&T signed a contract with the government to supply payphones to all the government complexes in the city. It was unbelievable the number of payphones that had to be replaced. I did get to spend a lot of time on the Air Force Academy. It took me longer to fight the traffic and find my way around in Colorado Springs than it took me to get to Telluride from Montrose.

One week they sent me to La Junta to work at the Fort Lyons soldier's home. AT&T had lost their telephone contract with Fort Lyons and did not get too concerned about their needs. The new company had not finished their installation and the home was still working off the old Bell System equipment. They needed several phones moved and repaired to get by until the new installation was complete. By the time I arrived, I realized I had to deal with a lot of unhappy campers. It took all of my political expertise and a lot of work to make them somewhat happy. I was still having a hard time with the idea that all telephone customers were no longer ours.

AT&T realized that to keep up with the ever-changing telephone equipment they would have to send us to training classes and they did a good job



of that. Our training center was in a big black glass building we called the Darth Vader building, from the then popular movie Star Wars. We stayed in a 5-star hotel and had to wear our white shirt and tie to class. I was in hog heaven for a while, but it didn't take long until I was ready to get back to the Western Slope.

The new company was trying to change to meet the challenge of making a profit. That really did not happen until they replaced the old upper management personnel with the "Bell shaped heads". Many managers had worked in the regulated company too long, where making a profit was not the goal. Most of the managers had enough time to take the "buy out". As the new more business- and less customer -orientated managers took over, we started seeing a big change in the company.

I was kind of caught in the middle. I could see why they would do things, but I also felt like we lost a lot of customers because of the new directives. Other technicians and I believed AT&T did not want the small business customer, especially in rural areas. This mentality helped my business, **Swartley's Enterprises**, big time in the future.

With most of the customers that were left I would handle the paper- work to get orders issued, because I knew who to call. By the time I started my own business, most of my customers did not know AT&T was still in business and did not care, as long their phone worked. The marketing department loved me because I sold a lot of equipment and the dispatchers didn't because it messed up their control pattern. Since we were union, the company could not reward us with money so they came up with a point system that allowed us to order things with the points for selling things. I had every possible tool in the catalog.

I cannot remember the time line for sure, but after three years or so I was the only technician left on the Western Slope. They would schedule me in Telluride on Monday and Tuesday; Wednesday I either worked in Montrose or Gunnison; and Thursday and Friday in Grand Junction. This made some of our customers wait on getting orders worked so we kept losing them.

My Green American Express had a good workout, along with my new Dodge Caravan. As I sat in my now almost vacant suite, I learned that the company would pay me extra to work from home. I packed up everything I wanted from the office and moved it to my house and they closed down our office. I liked this set-up.

In April of 1990, AT&T announced plans to lay off 2,500 employees. The AT&T/union contract allowed people with seniority to "bump" employees with less time. To do this I would have had to transfer to Denver. I had enough time to retire, so I did. They paid the expenses for the wife and me to go to Denver for a seminar on what would happen after we retire. They showed us a cute movie about how the retiree would follow their spouse around the house looking for something to do or how one spouse would want to travel while the other one was still working on their career. None of this applied to us, because I planned on contracting back to the company. Also, due to the union contract I received a good termination check because I was the last one working when they closed down the office. Of course, they paid it on the last day of the year and the IRS was happy. I walked around singing the parts I could remember of the song "turn out the lights, the party's over".

So on December 17, 1990, I woke up unemployed after almost 32 years! Before 1984, the thought of the telephone company laying anyone off was unthinkable; now it is the norm. Although it was the best thing to happen to me, I was still bitter. I felt betrayed because I had put company needs above everything else for so many years. I had a hard time believing they would do this to me. In time I mellowed and realized they had rewarded me over the years for all my effort. They had paid for all the training I

received, provided me with a livable wage and medical coverage. With thanks to the union, I had many weeks of vacation to spend with my family, a decent retirement check and insurance. I also realized that AT&T could not have survived keeping a lot of us old employees with over six weeks of vacation around very long. The communications industry was changing so fast that it had to be lean and mean to compete.



Lucent Technologies
Bell Labs Innovations

In 1996, AT&T had a major break-up again. This created Lucent Technologies and there was no longer an ATTIS. AT&T transferred my retirement funds to Lucent, ending my relationship with AT&T except for my phone bill. In 2006, Lucent merged with Alcatel, a French Company, becoming Alcatel-Lucent headquartered in Paris, France. They sign my pension check.

After 1996, there was not much left of what once was the world's largest monopoly. In the meantime Ed Whitacre, a former AT&T executive, took over as president of Southwestern Bell (SBC), one of the original operating companies. He slowly acquired other original operating companies plus assorted cell, internet, cable, and related companies. In 2005, SBC purchased the AT&T Corporation and changed its name back to AT&T. By 2007, it was the 4th largest non oil-producing company in the U.S.

Now both AT&T and Alcatel-Lucent are ever-changing companies, buying and selling other companies to survive in the fast-changing telecommunications world. In my mind, AT&T's world started changing when they lost the Charterphone® case in the 1970's. I can still remember the AT&T news release on the case, and the AT&T spokesman telling everyone that the loss will not affect AT&T's operation whatsoever. He was probably the same spokesman that said, in 1980, that splitting up the Bell System would not have any effect on their employees.

Now, in 2011, as I see every man, woman and child with their eyes glued to a cell phone, I think back to 50 years ago when I started. The Bell System was trying to get every household on a four-party line instead of an eight-party line. What will it be like 50 years from now? Will everyone just have a micro-chip installed in their head or will the world reset and use smoke signals???

What's Next?



We hope you and your families have an enjoyable and safe summer!