Dial Log

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Director's Report

by Jody Georgeson

I have mixed feelings as I write this, my last report as Director of THG. I've been fortunate to work with some wonderful people during the last 13 years. After retiring from U S West in 1999, I joined THG as **Herb Hackenburg's** secretary, and moved on to become the official THG Archivist. When Herb retired, we were lucky to have **Mary Riffle** take over. I knew I had big shoes to fill when then THG President **Bob Runice** asked me to become our third Executive Director.

I have tried to continue their efforts to make our organization the finest telecom history repository in the country. This would have been impossible without the help of a series of wonderful assistants: **Carol Baird** (who gave me my start here), **Marty Donovan**, **Leah Be** and **Renee Lang.** And of course nothing would get done without the volunteers, who work tirelessly to collect, safeguard and share the historical evidence of the industry. **Don Ostrand** and all the volunteers in Seattle do a wonderful job of maintaining and sharing our history at the newly-renamed *Herbert H. Warrick, Jr. Museum of Communications.* I have also had the opportunity to learn from and be guided by our many wonderful Board members.

We've had some exciting times – floods in the archives, a very successful launch of our Virtual Museum, the move from 1005 17th Street, a wonderful exhibit at the Denver Public Library. We've seen the buying and selling of several companies – U S West, Qwest, and now CenturyLink. Fun stuff…

However, I have made the decision to retire, again, "to pursue other interests." I do intend to be an active volunteer, so I'm not leaving entirely. A new director has yet to be named, but I know they will have the full support of the Board, the volunteers and our members, just as I have. I want to thank you all for helping me with this task, and for continuing to support THG. All in all, it's been great (well, except maybe for the move). Thanks to all of you who made it all possible!

In Memory

George W. Howard

It is with much sadness that we announce the unexpected death of George Howard on April 21, 2013. George was traveling home to Colorado from an Antique Caterpillar Machinery Owners Club event in Peoria, Illinois. The group had stopped for the night in Salina, Kansas, where George apparently died in his sleep.

George was a long-time THG member, joining when he was still employed as a judge in the New York State Court System. After his retirement, he moved to Colorado and became an active volunteer with our organization. We are honored that George bequeathed his collection of telephone equipment and documents to THG.

George was an avid Caterpillar equipment collector, and served as an ACMOC board member for many years. He had a wide variety of interests, including telephones and telecom history, antique furniture, family genealogy, and railroading. He volunteered with a number of museums and historical organizations in the area.

Correction

In our haste to get the last issue of the *Dial-Log* to you, we inadvertently left out the name of one of our Directors: **Don Ostrand** is not only an important member of the Board, but is also the Curator of the Herbert H. Warrick, Jr. Museum of Communications in Seattle. We apologize to our readers and to Don for the oversight.

What happened …

100 years ago -- 1913 -- Ground was broken on the new AT&T headquarters building at 195 Broadway in new York City.

AT&T agreed to become a regulated monopoly. Their monopoly would be allowed, but they had to connect competing local companies and let the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) approve their prices and policies.

75 years ago -- 1928 -- Herbert Hoover becomes first president of the United States with a phone on his desk. Until this time, the president talked on a phone from a booth outside his executive office.

There were 30,116 miles of telephone poles in North Dakota.

50 years ago – 1963 – The world's first successful synchronous communications satellite, the Syncom II, was used to transmit voices live between the U.S. and Africa.

A hotline was established between the White House and the Kremlin following the Cuban missile crisis.

Lobster Telephone

"*I do not understand why, when I ask for a grilled lobster in a restaurant, I am never served a cooked telephone; I do not understand why champagne is always chilled and why on the other hand telephones, which are habitually so frightfully warm and disagreeably sticky to the touch, are not also put in silver buckets with crushed ice around them.*

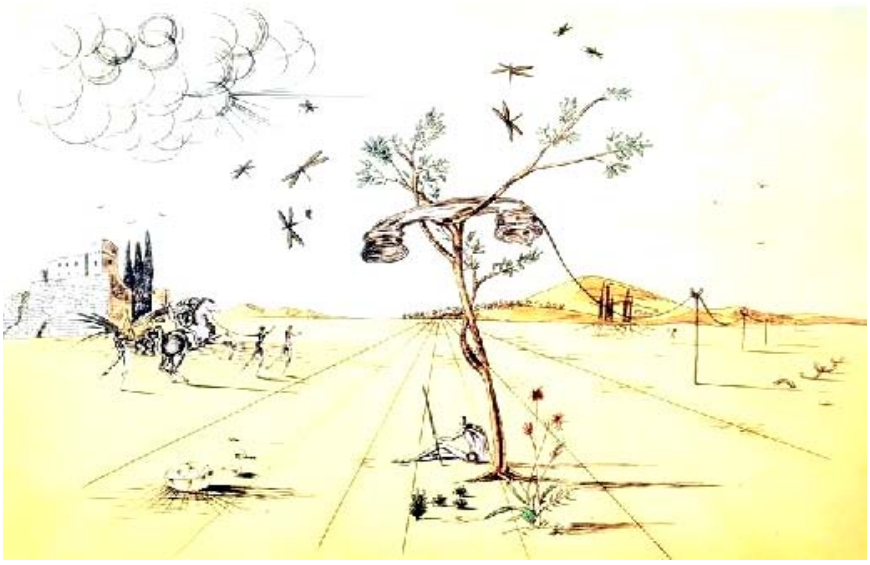
Telephone frappé, mint-coloured telephone, aphrodisiac telephone, lobster-telephone, telephone sheathed in sable for the boudoirs of sirens with fingernails protected with ermine, Edgar Allen Poe telephones with a dead rat concealed within, Boecklin telephones installed inside a cypress tree (and with an allegory of death in inlayed silver on their backs), telephones on the leash which would walk about, screwed to the back of a living turtle ... telephones ... telephones ... telephones ..." Savador Dali

Who but Salvador Dali could make a telephone receiver the central subject of a work of art? Much of what Dali depicted in his works was inspired by the landscape that surrounded him and current or historical events that impacted him.

The first appearance of a phone came in Dali's unusually-titled canvas of 1938, just prior to the outbreak of war: "Debris of an Automobile Giving Birth to a Blind Horse Biting a Telephone." As the winds of imminent war blew ever stronger, subsequent war pictures by Dali also featured a telephone, including "The Sublime Moment" (1938), "Beach with Telephone" (1938),

the very gloomy “Imperial Violets” (1938), and the remarkable 1939 painting (left), “The Enigma of Hitler,” which revealed a cracked and melting telephone receiver.

In “Telephone,” (right) Dali seizes upon an oversized phone receiver to symbolize his fear of the consequences of the Munich agreement between Neville Chamberlain and Adolf Hitler. Much of the attempt at diplomacy during World War II was conducted over the telephone, which became a key element in a host of Dali pictures designed to make a statement about the anguish of war.



During the 1970s, Dali still used telephones in his art, as seen in the lithograph to the left, Disembodied Telephone in the Desert. Now, though, there were elements of hope – green grass, flowers and winged creatures.

Much has been written about the symbolism in Dali’s works. It’s also possible that Dali simply enjoyed the idea of putting things in unexpected places: glowing heads of Lenin on piano keys…horses galloping out of cypress trees…the flames of a fire covering the body of a giraffe…and, yes, a lobster serving as a telephone receiver.

Postcard exhibit

In honor of National Postcard Week (May 5-11), THG mounted an exhibit outside of our museum in the MST&T Headquarters building. This traveling exhibit will be available for other locations now that Postcard Week is over. To see a few of our telephone related cards, visit our web site at: www.telcomhistory.org.

Edwin Miles Burgess

By Renee Lang

While looking through some things we received at THG, I found a family scrapbook. We don't know how long we have had it or who gave it to us. Being a genealogist, I was stunned at what was in this wonderful historic record -- what I would give to find something like this on my family! There were original birth and marriage records, and stories about members of the family. It was time to search for the telecommunications link, the reason we received this gift.

Edwin Miles Burgess was a Vice President of MST&T. In most records he is referred to as E. M. Burgess. He was Operating Vice President and Director under President F. H. Reid. He was the first General Manager of Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company when the company incorporated on July 17, 1911, after the consolidation of Colorado Telephone Company, Tri State Telephone and Telegraph and Rocky Mountain Bell Telephone Company. E. M. Burgess was one of the incorporators of MST&T.

Mr. Burgess started his telephone career at the age of 18 as a telephone operator in Pueblo, Colorado, with the Colorado Telephone Company. He began his career on November 1, 1881. He was transferred to Denver as an operator. In 1884 he became the manager of the Central City exchange. Around 1887 he was appointed chief inspector in the plant department and in 1891 he was promoted to general superintendent. He held this post till 1904 when he was promoted to general manager. In 1913 he became a vice president of the company and in 1920 he was made Operating Vice President. He served in this position until he retired on December 31, 1926, after forty-five years of service.

Articles collected at the time of his retirement characterize him as being very efficient from the beginning and throughout his career. He seemed to be born with the ability to read blueprints, and his knowledge of geography and the topography of the territory was uncanny. He knew the character of every mile of country traversed by the toll lines, the nature of the soil and the slope of the watersheds. In the early years he traveled a lot to supervise and inspect the building of new toll lines and new exchanges. His human qualities endeared him to many associates and employees. His fairness and impartiality in relations with people were often mentioned.

At his retirement, he received a solid gold forty-five year service button and a handsome watch. Mr. Burgess responded, with his usual modesty and charm, that the success he achieved was due not to his own efforts but to the loyalty and co-operation of those he served with through the years.

Edwin Miles Burgess was born in Hensonville, New York in about 1864, according to his son's birth certificate. The Mountain States Monitor of December 1926 states that he was born in Marlborough, New York. He married Bessie H. Lake in Central City on September 7, 1885. They had two children, Elsa and Ralph Lake Burgess. (Ralph also had a very long career with the "phone company," from 1907 to 1954.) Edwin died at the age of 80 on August 1, 1944 in California.

If anyone out there knows someone in this family, we would love for them to have this scrapbook.

Me and the Bell System Breakup

By John Swartley

To make my daily drive from Montrose to Telluride more pleasant, I installed a radio in my telephone van. On one of my trips home in 1982, they interrupted my music with a news alert that AT&T had decided to break up the Bell System into several different operating companies. The next statement on the news release was that this was not going to affect the Bell System employees in any way. Several times during the next six years of roller coaster events, I would have liked to have found the person that released that statement.


Special Issue

MB TIMES

Underlying purpose: smooth transition

AT&T files divestiture plan for largest corporate restructuring

Since 1949 the Federal Government and the Bell System had spent millions of dollars (that both the tax-payers and customers paid for) on lawyers' fees, deciding how to break up the so-called monopoly that was the Bell System. So on New Year's Eve 1984, we all watched the big AT&T ball logo come down at Times Square in New York, officially starting the breakup of what was at the time, the world's largest monopoly. Although the government initiated the break-up, in my mind fast-changing technology was the biggest factor. The Bell System was too large and too regulated to keep up with the ever-changing communication technology. Even today, the tax-payers and customers are paying large lawyers' fees trying to keep the ever-changing telecommunication giants in line.

Divestiture allowed the operating companies (like U S West in our area) to furnish the dial tone to the "demark," a new term we had to deal with. AT&T kept all the telephones in customer houses. The residential customer had the choice of buying the telephone set, leasing it from AT&T or buying their telephone from one of the many new stores selling all types of 'phones. For over a hundred years, the customer just called the Telephone Company who would solve the problem. Now it was an all new ball game. Younger customers adapted to the change, but the older customers often had a rough time.

First the customer had to prove where the trouble was, in the house or in the outside lines. This was done at the "demark" or protector on the outside of the house. Most of the customers did not have the foggiest idea how to do that. If they called U S West and the trouble was inside the house, they received a large bill and the trouble was not fixed. If they called AT&T and the trouble was not in the house, AT&T billed them and the trouble was still not fixed. I stayed with AT&T and had several residential repair calls daily. I had trouble with the amount AT&T was charging per hour, and had to do some creative time-keeping to keep the cost down and still cover my time, especially if the customers looked like they were living on a fixed income. In time, the customers

adjusted to the after-divestiture Telephone Company, but it was hard on the older customers who had been told for years not to touch their telephones except to call.

To add to the confusion were the many new phones that came on the market after the divesture. So many of them were cheap and did not operate well and the customer would still call us when they did not work. All we could do is tell them the problem and bill them an expensive trip charge. One that sticks in my mind is the first portable house phones. They all worked on the same radio frequency, and if two neighbors bought the same phone they would get each others' calls. Of course the first thing they would do was call us; all I could do was explain the facts at a great expense. I found it interesting that the same people that complained about us being a big monopoly were now complaining about the break-up.

Business customers had it a little easier; they were already leasing their equipment when it was transferred to AT&T. As the new electronic telephone systems were developed at lower costs, AT&T slowly started raising the prices of the old leased telephone equipment to force the business customer to replace it. By then there were several small business telephone companies selling equipment at a cheaper rate than AT&T; we lost a lot of customers that we had taken care of for years and it was hard for us to deal with. Little did I know that in time I would be one of those small companies.

One of the major business problems was the large companies with data lines connecting different locations. The term "ain't my problem" took on a whole new meaning. Back in the old days, we could get a repairman on each end of the circuit and all the central office repairmen in between and soon solve the problem. After Divestiture everyone involved would test their section and tell us it was not their problem. This usually turned into a nightmare with a very upset customer that did not care whose problem it was; they just wanted it fixed. After a lot of hassle and the involvement of several management personnel, the problem would usually be traced to a bad test in one section.

The central office where the dial tone came from was assigned to U S West and the long distance or toll offices belonged to AT&T. Since both offices were in the same building they placed a colored tape on the floor between the two offices. Employees were not allowed to cross the tape and were required to call each other on the phone instead of talking directly. You can guess how that went over with employees that had worked together for years.

Some of us in the business installation group actually transferred to AT&T in 1982. AT&T started the new company called American Bell Inc. It was a new unregulated part of AT&T organized to sell business equipment without going through the rate change process with the FCC. With the ever-changing technology, the cost of new equipment was changing just as fast and the company had to change their pricing accordingly. At this time our mode of operation did not change much except we reported to a supervisor

in another town and our pay stubs did not have a name on it; the checks did not bounce so we did not give it much thought. Divesture in 1984 did away with American Bell.

We all felt secure in our jobs because for over one hundred years no one ever got laid off from the Bell System -- wrong!!!

After the divestiture I more or less turned out the lights in Montrose and had to deal with all the equipment, furniture, etc. I was now one of the new contractors to ATTIS, which was a disaster that I will deal with in another Swartley war story.

As I send this war story to Dial Log, I am sitting in my very comfortable office chair that has an American Bell inventory sticker on the bottom.

Early Seattle Telephone Exchange Development

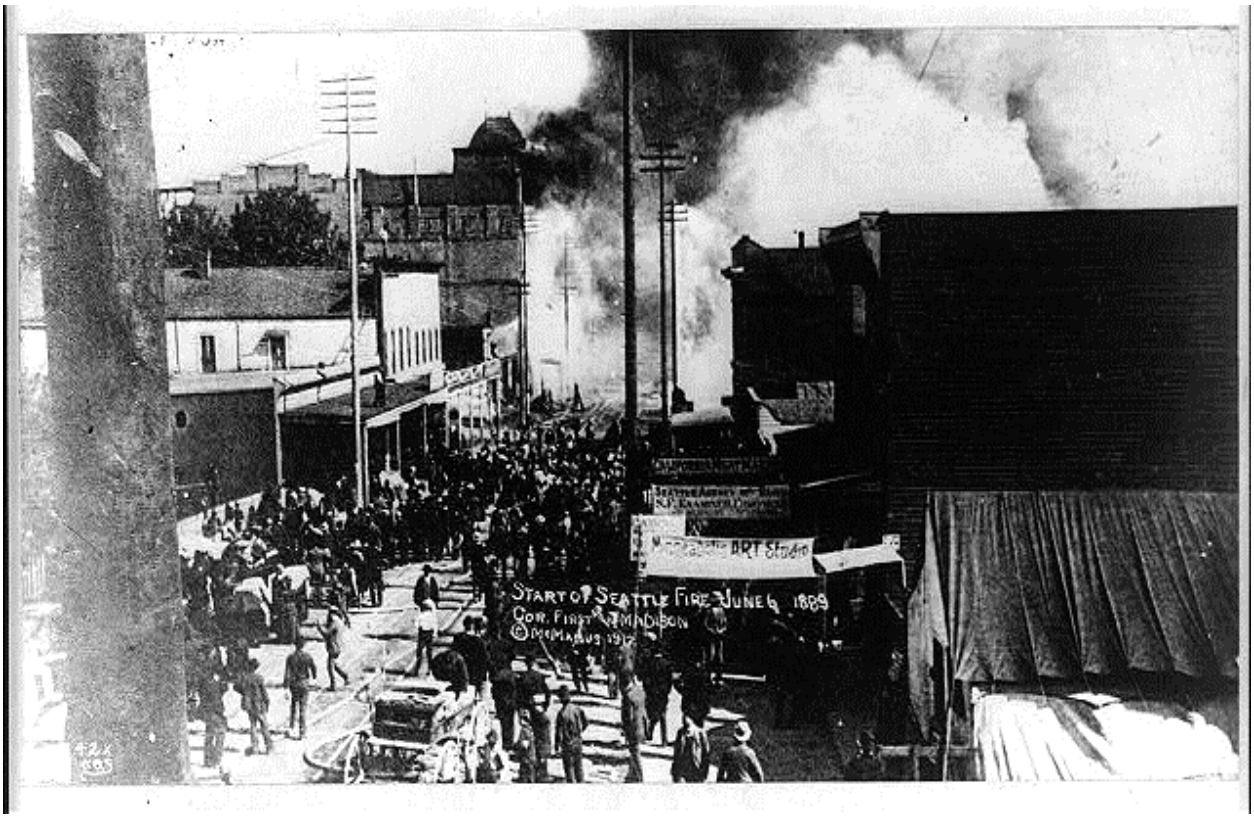
From Don Ostrand: This was typed directly from almost illegible handwritten notes by John Nelson.

The first telephone exchange in the city of Seattle was located in a small two-story frame building located at the southeast corner of Second Avenue and Cherry Street, where the Alaska building now stands. The Western Union Telegraph occupying the ground floor of this building, and the Telephone Company had two small rooms on the second floor. One of these rooms was used for the switchboard and operating room. The other room was the manager's office and also served as a storeroom. I understand this exchange was installed in 1883. The line construction consisted of # 16 iron wire grounded circuits strung mostly on top of buildings in the business district.

The instruments were equipped with Blake transmitters and a very large bell known as the "past bell." It was also called the Cincinnati bell and sounded like an old fashioned coffee grinder.

Sometimes we used to run short of transmitters and on short lines we used a receiver mounted on a small bracket just below the bell to take the place of the transmitter. This kind of instrument we called the magneto transmitter set. They had no battery connection and would not talk up very good on a long circuit.

In the early part of 1888 the exchange was moved to a new brick building located at Yesler Way and Occidental Avenue known as the Korn Block. New pole lines were built in the business district and mostly all of the house top construction removed.



Just about the time this part of the construction had been completed, the big Seattle fire of June 6, 1889 destroyed the exchange building as well as the outside plant in the business district south of Union Street and west of Third Avenue on to the waterfront. The only thing that was saved was a few instruments that we took out of buildings ahead of the fire.

The first job we had to do after the fire was to clear up the streets of wire and burnt poles in order to open the streets for traffic. Some of the poles were lying across the streets and others were standing but badly burnt and in danger of falling at any time and wires hanging down in every direction.

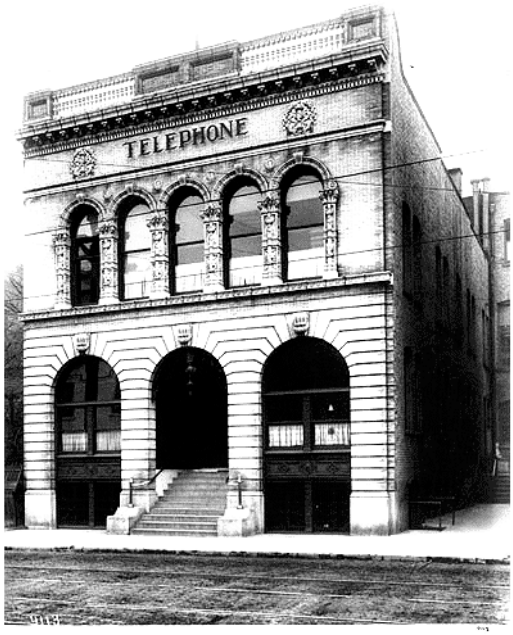
This job took us about four days. In the meantime, material such as a second hand switchboard, wire and cotton-covered cables were rushed to Seattle from Portland and San Francisco by express and a new temporary exchange was installed on the top floor of a two-story building at the corner of Third Avenue and Marion Street and in two weeks time, telephone service was restored. All of the existing phones outside of the burned district had been connected up with this exchange and many new phones had been installed in business houses that started up their businesses in tents in the burned district. Preparation was made at once for the building of a new exchange. A new building at the old location (Yesler Way and Occidental Avenue) was started almost before the fire was out and as soon as the streets had been cleared of debris we started work on the outside plant.

Eighty foot poles jointly owned by the Telephone Company and the old Gas and Electric Company were erected all through the burned district. On most of these poles, we placed 14-8 crossarms equipped with ten knobs, telephone occupying the top space

of these pole lines. On every second cross-arm a single #9 iron wire was strung which was used for a return ground. In other words, 19 lines or stations were connected to one return. If a fuse in one of the cable boxes, or on the frame, open all 19 lines were crossed up. This method was called the "McClun System." The line wire used in those days for exchange was #16 iron wire. All lines were main lines -- no party lines.

About the first of the year 1890, the new exchange was completed and ready for service. A new Western Electric multiple magneto switchboard has been installed and quite a number of aerial cables placed. At the same time we removed all of the old "past bells" and replaced same with an 80 ohm generating bell known as the Chicago Bell made by the Western Electric Company. Later after the express system had been installed, the generators in this bell were removed, wiring changed and used on main line service.

In 1895 two branch exchanges were installed. One was located at Fifth North and Denny Way known as the Union office serving the district north of Denny Way from the Bay to the intersection of Denny Way and Madison Street. Another branch exchange was established at the northeast corner of Third and Pike and was known as the Pike office. This exchange served the district between Denny Way and Union Street from the Bay to about 18th Avenue. Two units of switchboards were installed in the Main building at Yesler and Occidental. One was called the Rainier serving the district east of 18th Avenue and south of Union Street. The balance of the stations were connected with the main switchboard. At the time this change was made, all lines were made metallic. All instruments were changed and party line service established.



1108 Third Avenue, Seattle, WA

In 1897 and 1898 the company built the first building in Seattle, the old main building at 1108 Third Avenue, which is familiar to everybody. At the same time, underground conduit and cables were placed in the business district and the two branch exchanges were discontinued and all of the customers' stations were served from this one building. In 1902, two branch exchanges were established in the district north of the Lake Washington Canal serving this area. One was located in Ballard and called the Ballard exchange and the other on Fremont Avenue called the North. From that time to the present, most everybody is familiar with the development and changes that have been made in this telephone system in Seattle.

We at THG wish all of you a safe and happy summer!