



Dial Log



Published by the
Telecommunications History Group, Inc.

DENVER, COLORADO

(303) 296-1221
Winter 2005, Vol. 9, No. 4

www.telcomhistory.org
Jody Georgeson, EDITOR

Director's Report

By Jody Georgeson

Lots going on around here. Both **Mary Riffle** (Executive Director) and **Carol Baird** (Executive Secretary) have retired. After a budget review, the Board of Directors determined that THG needed to reduce the staff to one part-time employee, and I have been chosen. Both Carol and Mary have agreed to continue as volunteers, so we won't have to do without them completely. I'll do my best to keep things going, but they leave very big shoes to fill. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank them both for all their years of hard work.

Qwest asked us to help mount an exhibit at the 100th annual National Western Stock Show in January. They'll be using a demonstration step switch, some antique telephone and photographs from our collection. If you have a chance, stop by Qwest's booth. We're also helping to decorate the lounge in the Qwest Training Center in Lakewood, Colorado with the loan of more equipment and images.

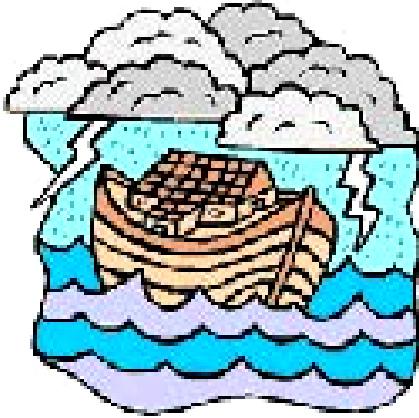
The Archives Month celebration was a great success this year. In addition to the exhibit in the 1005 17th St. Building, we held the first annual THG Volunteer Hall of Fame ceremony. See the story on page 2 for details.

We continue to upgrade our web site and the virtual museum. **Milo Masura** and **Roy Lynn's** log and pictures of their trip to Montana are fascinating! To see them, go to www.telcomhistory.org and click on "Volunteers."

One of our most exciting (and time consuming) projects is our work on the virtual tour of the 941 14th St. telephone building. Our plan is to have it available on the Internet by June 2006.

The Seattle volunteers have been working on a self-guided tour of their museum (page 5) and continue their work to restore a 1955 International line truck. More about that on page 7.

And, oh yes, we had a flood. Read all about it on page 2.



Jody's Ark

By Herb Hackenburg

It was one of those little good news, big bad news sort of days at THG on December 8, 2005. Jody Georgeson, THG executive director/archivist, was just finishing up a job before she closed shop for the day.

The good news was that the newly bound 2004 telephone books had arrived from the bindery and Jody had the deliveryman place them in the administrative office area until the volunteers could enter them in the database and shelve them in the directory archive room. THG has over 7,000 directories, spanning a period from 1879 to the present. They are our most frequently accessed collection.

The bad news began when the fire alarm went off. This was no test. Jody quickly wrapped up the job she was doing and closed down her computer. The alarm continued to blast just above her head. While Jody is the fire warden for the THG section of the huge Qwest Communications office building in which we reside, she was completely alone so she didn't have to search for anyone. On her way out of the archive, Jody paused to look into the directory room. It was

then she saw that the alarm was not about fire--it was about water. (A line had frozen and two sprinkler heads had burst in the Auditorium directly above the Archives.)

Water was cascading from the ceiling down on the shelving housing thousands of historic telephone directories, in most cases the only such directories in existence.

Jody switched to "MAJOR EMERGENCY" mode. She reported the leaks to building security; pulled down the waterproof doors on the shelves holding our oldest books (we only have eight bays of these wonderful shelves); and quickly wheeled the book cart containing the THG "down winder" books into a safe area. Then she attempted to place the large sheet of heavy construction grade plastic over the shelves. This 40 by 60 foot sheet was too heavy for Jody to handle, and being "vertically challenged" didn't help.



The directory room with sheets of plastic over shelving.

She gave up on the plastic and began to gather armloads of damp books from the affected shelves and placing them anywhere she could in the nearest available dry areas. As the minutes passed Jody's hair and clothes got wetter—as did the books she was trying to save.

It got worse. New leaks appeared in the ceiling above THG's flat files. These leaks were small and Jody put wastebaskets on top of the files to catch the water. She also placed 3M M-FL550DD maintenance absorbent in areas that had water to be soaked up.

Soon Qwest janitors and electricians showed up to help. The electricians put up our plastic and more of their own. The janitors helped carry books to safety, and began mopping up.

Dave Tosh, Qwest Real Estate manager, told Jody the company had hired a flood damage control company to come in and begin salvage operations. (*Strangely enough, it was the same contractor Jody had called to help with the documents.*) He said that Qwest would pay for all building repairs, but not to repair the damage to THG's material. The best way to save a wet book is to have it freeze dried, then restored at a cost of about \$40 to \$50 a book. THG had 166 wet books. And very little money.

The flood control company showed up and began placing turbo dryers, high capacity dehumidifiers and portable water storage units throughout the THG archive. There were electrical cords and rubber drainage tubes running all over the place. It was a wet and weary Jody who finally made it home late

Thursday. She had time to call THG volunteers for clean up duty on Friday before she fell asleep.

Three volunteers were able to come in on Friday; **George Howard, Merlin Creason** and myself. We were greeted by a tired, grin-and-bear-it, Jody.

The wet books were placed standing up (with pages riffled open) on flat surfaces throughout the archive. Our first

job was to carefully survey the damaged books and find books that could be dried with the help of the dehumidifiers and turbo fans. (The contractor told Jody the fans would remain in place for several days.) We also had to figure out a way to save the damaged unbound books that could not stand up on their own.

We rigged some clotheslines so we could hang up the unbound directories to dry. Then we inspected 181 books. Fifteen of the 181 were



not damaged. We listed all the damaged books, took our list to the duplicate books in our basement archive and found duplicates for ten of our larger and most damaged books. Of the remaining 156, we found that 129 could probably be dried with only minor problems (e.g., ruffled pages), but we still had 27 badly damaged books that would have to be freeze dried -- we'd just have to find the money somewhere to do the job. The decision to freeze dry a water-damaged book must be made within 24 hours.



Directory room with fans and dehumidifier.

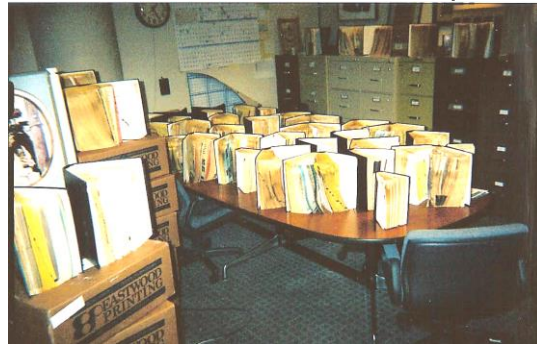
Jody talked to a conservator and told him we had 27 books to be freeze-dried. He looked over our book drying operation, pronounced it successful and went on to say that even the 27 badly damaged books could be saved by our cheap and simple methods.

So that's what we did. And it worked!

Three things made it work: Jody's quick and correct action; the immediate installation of the dryers

and dehumidifiers; and Denver's normally dry climate that serves as a natural barrier to mold and mildew growing in places like wet books.

Of course, the volunteers helped.



Editor's note: This is not a very elegant solution. The spines of the damaged books are warped and the pages crinkled. But, what is important is the information they contain, and that has been preserved.

The THG Volunteer Hall of Fame

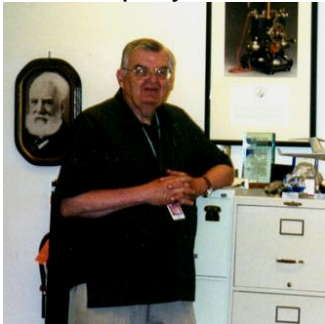
The first annual induction to the Hall of Fame took place on October 19, 2005. This year, two volunteers were honored: **Ken Pratt**, Volunteer of the Year; and **Herb Hackenburg**, Lifetime Achievement.

Ken has been here since nearly the start of THG and continues to be one of our most active volunteers.



Nearly every Wednesday, he can be found patiently sorting through documents,

preparing them for storage and entering their information into the database. Many of the articles and images in the *Dial-Log* are a result of documents Ken finds during the processing. Ken has a keen interest in and appreciation of history. His background as a manager in engineering, personnel and data systems at the phone company make him uniquely valuable to our work.



In 1990, along with two other volunteers, a small space in the 931 14th St. building and \$2,000, Herb

began what has become the Telecommunications History Group. He has remained its guiding force and main cheerleader. Since retiring in 2004, Herb has spent nearly as much time at THG as he did when he was paid to be here! We are grateful for his continued support, and for his broad knowledge of our industry's history.

I know you all join in thanking Ken and Herb for their efforts.

Stop, Look and Listen

By Don Ostrand

The Museum of Communications is providing on-site visitors a new tour opportunity. Through an anonymous grant we have purchased equipment that will allow self-guided tours of the museum.

We have selected Antenn|A|udio players, similar to MP3 players, to be our playback devices.

Our tour package, while still under development, is in the testing stage and is looking good. This is how it went together.

Over time our docents have taken note of the items that seem to interest the widest range of visitors. We have mapped the museum, and listed those items of interest. The next step was to take digital photos of the listed items. At this stage we reviewed and edited the items and photos.

Now came the hard part. The script for the recording stage needed to be prepared. Making a concise description of an item --not too technical but not too basic, either -- was a challenge. Would you use "this is a 1907 Western Electric picture frame front / cathedral top wooden wall magneto phone" or "this is a phone" or neither? Too much information versus not enough information; writing text is not easy.



The initial script was written and reviewed, edited and printed. A recording specialist (a former radio DJ) volunteered his services. A local recording studio was procured for making the master computer files.

Quiet on the set! The recordings were underway. On the second floor of the museum, we had mapped 64 items of interest. Once recorded and edited, the tour is 58 minutes long.

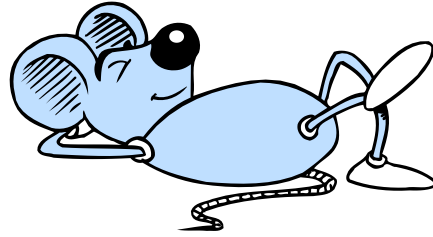
The Antenn|A|udio equipment came with a computer program (in French, a bit of a challenge), the interface equipment and cables that allowed us to transfer the recorded computer files onto our PC and convert them into the proprietary format used by the playback devices. Each of the sound tracks receives an identity number. We loaded the 64 individual sound tracks on 5 playback devices. We rate the quality of the recordings as very good.

The viewer will “key-in” the track number for the item being viewed. So we needed to post each item with the sound track number. Once that is done, we can view the items on a random basis. To hear the story, one must key in the corresponding or posted number.

We will have our volunteers critique the second floor program, and suggestions changes will be incorporated into the program. We should be up and running on the 2nd floor by the end of December. Then we are off to the 3rd floor.

We are always looking for volunteers. We would like to open our doors for weekend tours. With the self-guided capability available, being a docent will be much easier. Our visitors will be able to “Stop, Look and Listen” and the docents’ tasks will not be so technical in nature.

As a bonus, the completed self-guided tour package may have adaptability for our THG Virtual Museum project.



The Tale of a Rat

Volunteer **George Howard** brought this story (from The Telegraphic Journal, March 1, 1875) to our attention. George is indexing the contents of periodicals from the library of Alexander Graham Bell.

It having become necessary on a recent occasion, in one of our large provincial towns, to withdraw a cable of gutta-percha (a rubbery latex substance used as an insulator and water proofing com-pound) wires from some iron pipes, in a busy thoroughfare, the inspector in charge commenced operations shortly before midnight, to avoid the crowding which otherwise generally attends such feats in the daytime. The flush boxes being opened the men commenced hauling, the wires traveling with remarkable ease, till suddenly the workmen were interrupted by a shout from the inspector. They had forgotten to attach the iron wire to the other extremity of the cable, which is indispensable to the pulling in of a new or the return of the old cable when necessary. However, it was no use crying over spilt milk; the cable could not be thrust back, so the work was concluded, the boxes closed, and our friend retired to a restless couch with the conviction that he had done a stupid thing. After sundry turnings and twistings a "happy

thought" struck him, and, his mind at rest, he fell into deep repose.

The following day at the same hour, having invoked the aid of a rat catcher, and, armed with a large rat, a ferret, and a ball of string, wound on a Morse paper (*later known as ticker tape*) drum, he returned to the scene of his former exploit. The boxes were opened, and the rat having previously had one end of the string firmly attached to his body, was put into the pipe. Charmed with unexpected liberty, monsieur scampered away at a racing pace, dragging the twine with him until he stopped to investigate matters. The ferret was then put in, but the sight was enough. Off went the rat again until he sprang clean out of the next box.

One length was thus safe, and the same operation was commenced with the other; but the rat objecting to be made a cat's paw of, stopped short a few yards in the pipe, and boldly awaited the approach of the ferret. A terrific combat then commenced, cries and shrieks reaching the ears of the alarmed spectators outside, who dreaded, not only an utter failure of the second operation, but a stoppage of the pipes by one or more dead bodies. After sundry violent jerks had been given to the string however, the combatants, alarmed at such unexpected interruptions, separated; the ferret returned to his master, and our friend the rat, making for the other extremity of the pipes, carried the string right through, and so relieved the inspector from his anxiety.



Cruisin' with the Line Truck

By Don Ostrand

It's December and winter has again all but stopped our work on the line truck project. About one year ago, while in Port Angeles we were able to get the engine running well enough to load the truck onto an equipment trailer. We relocated it to AT&T's North Bend location. At North Bend it is secured from vandals behind a locked fence. Last winter the truck was wrapped up for protection from the elements.



This spring we purchased an aluminum RV carport and unwrapped the truck so our work could be resumed. This truck was in rough shape -- no lights, no brakes, the wiring was in questionable condition, much of the chassis was in need of repair and the tires didn't look so good either.

Good judgment made fixing the lights and brakes our first priority. Lights and wiring go together. Inspection showed that a great deal of "haywire" had been employed over the years. Many of the light fixtures and sockets were beyond repair. The instrument panel had been severely altered. Major parts of the wiring

harness were altered and weathered and worn beyond repair.

With the task identified, a couple volunteers set out to remove the wiring harness and build a new one. We were able to find and purchase a wiring diagram to fit the vehicle and were able to determine the gauge of each wire in the harness.

With all wires accounted for, we began building the new harness. Dale, our wiring guy, had this so well organized that all the new wires, were soon in place and the bundle of wires wrapped with shrink-wrap plastic tape. The end produce is a thing of beauty. In the mean time E-bay produced reflectors and lights that, while not exact replacements, would serve us well.

The instruments and switches on the dashboard were dirty, rusted and pitted. These too were refurbished and are now ready for reassembly.

The brake system was in need of total rebuilding. The master cylinder and all four wheel cylinders were beyond repair and all the hydraulic lines were rusted out. Believe it or not NAPA's catalog still shows parts for the 1955 IHC truck. Something was wrong. The master cylinder and the front wheel cylinders didn't match. Out comes the catalog again. There was an optional master cylinder and the sketch matched our old part. But the wheel cylinders were a different story. We determined that our particular part had been discontinued over 15 years ago. NAPA referred us to Seattle Brake and Clutch, who were able to provide replacement cylinders, hoses and adapters to make the parts fit.

While working on replacing the rear wheel cylinders we discovered

cracks in both brake drums. Not Good! Back to Seattle Brake and Clutch to get replacements. Bad news, these parts are no longer available, no cross-reference, nothing. We are still looking for two rear brake drums, 14" diameter, 2-5/8" brake surface, 5 hole wheel lugs with a casting number of BUDD68073, they fit a 1955 International R-140 4X4.

We have also finished replacing the hydraulic lines and have filled the system with brake fluid. Come spring we will pressure wash the chassis, body, and engine compartments; start reassembling the wiring and lights; and do all the body and fender work.

Next issue, we'll continue the Museum of Comuncations saga, with the tale of the #1XBAR story.



*Hello, Folks!
A Merry Christmas to You All*

Is this your last issue?

Postage and printing costs continue to rise.

Our budget will no longer allow us to mail to non-members. If you have not renewed your membership, please do so immediately, so you don't miss a single issue of the *Dial-Log*. Fill out the form below and mail it along with your check today!

If you have already renewed, thank you. Membership dues enable us to continue to preserve the proud heritage of the telephone industry.

Cut Here

2005 MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTION

Yes! I want to continue to receive the Dial-Log and help preserve our telecommunications history!

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

\$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$200 _____ Other _____

Please make your check payable to: The Telecommunications History Group

Mail to:
Telecommunications History Group
PO Box 8719
Denver, CO 80201-8719

Telecommunications History Group
P.O. Box 8719
Denver, CO 80201-8719



Save AMERICA'S TREASURES
OFFICIAL PROJECT