



Dial Log



Published by the
Telecommunications History Group, Inc.

DENVER, COLORADO

(303) 296-1221
Winter 2011, Vol. 15, no. 4

www.telcomhistory.org
Jody Georgeson, Editor

Director's Report

Our mission is to preserve the heritage of the telecommunications industry in the United States, and to make it accessible to the public.

This year we've worked especially hard to fulfill the part that speaks to making the information accessible to the public. Thanks to sponsorship from CenturyLink and CBM, the amazing assistance of the folks at the Denver Public Library, and lots of hard work by THG directors and volunteers, we mounted a very successful exhibit that illustrated the history of telecom in Colorado. A librarian sent the following e-mail to the DPL Western History manager, who forwarded it to us:

Just wanted to let you know I have been around here at the library for a long time now, and this exhibit has to be the best one I have ever seen. . .

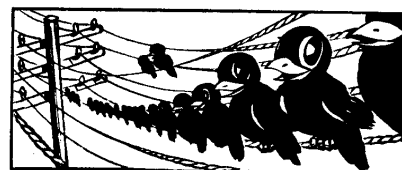
You can see the virtual exhibit on our website (telcomhistory.org).

In 2012, we'll be collaborating with the Molly Brown House and a museum in Golden. We hope to continue our success with exhibits in other cities and venues.

In Seattle, **Don Ostrand** and the volunteers had visitors from all over the world, of all ages and walks of life. They are particularly busy giving tours to schoolchildren. They also hosted a meeting of Historylink and the Association of King County Historical Organizations.

We were sad to say goodbye to some board members this year. **Gary and Kathy Flemming** are performing Peace Corps service in Morocco, and **Jim O'Boyle** decided to retire from active board duties. We'll miss all three of them and the expertise they brought to the board.

We are lucky, however, to have two new members. **Ernie Sampias** has agreed to be our new treasurer. Ernie retired as CFO of U S West Dex. **Ted Sandquist** was Director, Public Relations at U S West, so we'll certainly be putting him to work. A full list of Board members is on page two.



THG Board of Directors

John C Darrow, Senior Software Developer (ret.) – Qwest – *THG Secretary*

Laurence W DeMuth, Jr. EVP, General Counsel & Secretary (ret.) - U S West

David Dintenfass, Owner/Operator, Full-Track Productions

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Paul Malkoski, I.S. Project Mgr (ret.) – Qwest; Project Mgr., CHS

Joan Masztaler, Director (ret.), Wholesale Services - Qwest

Scott McClellan, VP Washington (ret.) - Qwest

Michael W. Nearing, Network Engineer CenturyLink, *THG Vice President*

Donald J. Ostrand, *Director, Museum of Communications*

Kay Pride, District Manager (ret.), Public Relations – Mountain Bell

Mary P. Riffle, Director,(ret.), Local Networks - Qwest

Ernest J. Sampias, CFO (ret.), U S West DEX, *THG Treasurer*

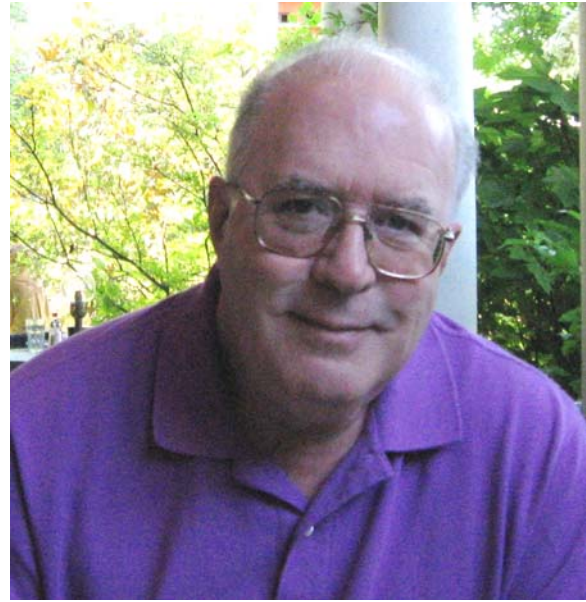
Ted Sandquist, Director (ret.), Public Relations - U S West, Inc.

Jack Shea, Executive Director (ret.), Benefits - U S West, *THG President*

Dale Tomrde, Founding Partner, NorthStone Group LLC

Herbert H. Warrick, Jr., AVP (ret.), Special Services & Engineering – U S West, *THG Vice President*

Jo Lynne Whiting, Vice President (ret.) - Qwest Dex



Dave Felice
THG Volunteer of the Year

We celebrated our wonderful volunteers on November 30th, with a luncheon at Diegos on the 16th Street mall in Denver.

Dave Felice was named 2011 Volunteer of the Year. Dave is a full-time employee of CenturyLink, who finds time to help us in a variety of ways. He's always on the lookout for people and material that have contributed to the history of the industry. He's cheerfully available when we need an extra strong back.

If you think that means weak mind, you'd be wrong. Dave's interests include the history of Denver, old cars, telecom, and who knows what else and he's articulate and enthusiastic about sharing them. You have probably enjoyed his articles in the Dial-Log, as he is a frequent contributor.

We are grateful to all of our volunteers and to our all-volunteer board. Thanks for all the hard work you put in on behalf of the History Group!

Buried Line Truck

By LaVerne Bleeker

My name is **LaVerne (Bleek) Bleeker**, retired Fleet Manager. All of us in those days started as a framer or a lineman:, they chose me to be a lineman in the fall of 1956. After working for a few line foremen in Boulder, Colorado, I was transferred to Granby, Colorado to work for a great foreman, **Bob Buchanan**.

As work went on I continued to ask for more responsibility and it came as Bob thought I was ready for it. One thing led to another and I was marking up the prints, paying the bills that had accumulated that week and so on. I was also “in charge” of our line truck, which meant I drove it, and kept it clean and stocked. While living in Granby, Bob the foreman had picked out a nice motel for us to stay. It was on the far west end of town separated from the nearest motel by a large field of wild grass that the motel owner kept mowed and looking really nice. This lawn extended behind the motel for about 200 to 300 feet which is where the aerial town cable dead-ended and was connected to open wire for its trip north and west.

It came to pass that my friend--I'll call him 'George'--and I went to the local bar after dinner to imbibe a few beers.

We used George's car and as usual he dropped me off at the motel and proceeded to the pole out back that had the terminal on it, put on his hooks and belt and a “dumbbell” lineman's phone, climbed the pole and dialed his girlfriend in Denver. Free of course. By the time he was finished I was already in bed when George was banging on my door yelling “Bleek, I need your help.”

His problem was that the tires on his old car were as bald as a sheet of blank paper and the motel manager had just watered the grass back there. As you have probably guessed, George's car wouldn't move because of the combination of bald tires and wet grass.

The help he suggested was for me to drive the line truck out there and by the time I got there he would already have one end of a chain hooked around his axle and would throw the other end of the chain over a towing hook on the front of the truck. I was to back out slowly.

As soon as we were hooked up, I threw the transmission into low reverse. In theory, I would slowly back out to the motel and packed gravel. As soon as power was applied to the back wheels of the truck, I heard a sickening sucking sound as we sunk up to the bed of the truck. Now, we realized, we were in a lot of trouble.



Our next bright idea was to run our winch cable out to a light pole that had been set to support a yard light. That didn't work very well either as the light pole quickly became horizontal with the ground. Well, then, let's run the winch cable out to that bridge on the highway; that will surely hold it. As soon as we were hooked up and started to tighten the winch cable and let out the clutch George yelled, "Stop, stop!" We were moving the bridge post that we had hooked up to.

I need to mention a few things that we had performed early on; we dug an angled trench behind the rear tires of the truck and the line truck was an REO, a brand of truck designed to sound like any other truck only with straight pipes. In other words, very, very loud.

We gave up and called the only large wrecker in Granby and asked for help. Only after we ran his winch line out to our truck and back to his wrecker and our winch line from the line truck out to his wrecker and back to our truck with both of us pulling at the same time did we retrieve our truck from that damned grass/muck/mud. We paid the wrecker guy and proceeded up town to the "do it yourself" car wash. After what seemed like an eternity, we went back to the motel and washed off our boots and jeans and proceeded to the place where we met the crew each morning.

The first thing Bob asked us was what we had done the night before. Our answer was, "Nothing, grabbed a couple of beers and hit the sack."

His response was, "You lying bunch of _____." it turned out that because of our loud truck we had awakened all the guests as well as the owners and they thought it was the funniest thing they had seen in a long while, two stumbling drunks who were

plainly in over their heads. They asked Bob to not reprimand us as the motel owner would do that himself. Needless to say, we spent many evenings shoveling, raking, planting grass, resetting the light pole and anything else the owner wanted us to do.

Did we learn our lesson? I hope so, but I'm not sure.



In Memory

Robert Carl Blanz (1932 - 2011)

"Bob" Blanz, 79, passed away peacefully on October 23rd at Hiland Cottage Hospice in Petoskey, Michigan.

He graduated valedictorian of his Galion (OH) High School class and went on to earn a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from Case Western Reserve in Cleveland. He completed post-graduate work at Princeton, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Rutgers College, and Carleton College.

After serving in the U.S. Army Signal Corps., he returned to the Bell System where enjoyed a nearly 40 year career. He retired as the President of both Mountain Bell and Nevada Bell.



CenturyLink™

By now, we're all aware that we have a new local telephone company. How many of us know about its history?

According to CenturyLink's website, "William Clarke and Marie Williams purchased the Oak Ridge Telephone Company for \$500 from F.E. Hogan, Sr. in 1930. There were 75 paid subscribers. The switchboard was relocated to the Williams' front parlor so the family could man the board 24-hours a day. The exception was between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Sundays, when the office closed for church and dinner. Marie wrote out the bills by hand, and eight-year-old son Clarke McRae Williams delivered them on his bicycle."

When the younger Williams returned from WWII, his parents gave him and his new wife the company as a wedding gift. Eventually, the company came to be named Century Telephone Enterprises. Clarke Williams expanded the service area and grew the business throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In 1978, shares of the company's stock were sold on the New York Stock Exchange for the first time.

When, in 1983, the FCC authorized cellular mobile telephone service, Century obtained approval to operate cellular systems in three areas in Michigan. They continued to expand, acquiring Universal Telephone, Inc 1989, Central Telephone Company of

Ohio 1992, Pacific Telecom, Inc. (PTI) in 1997, and access lines in Wisconsin, Arkansas, Alabama and Missouri.

The November 25, 2002 issue of Business Week ranked CenturyTel 16th among the 100 top information technology companies and ahead of all other U.S.-based telecommunication companies. Rankings were based on revenues, sales growth, profitability and stock appreciation.

Acquisition of Embarq Corp. in 2009 created the largest independent telecommunications provider and fourth largest telecommunications provider – based on access lines – in the United States. After purchasing Sawis and Qwest in 2011, the company (now known as CenturyLink) became a national communications company providing broadband, voice and wireless services, advanced entertainment services through its high-quality advanced fiber optic network and multiple data centers. It is now the third largest telecommunications provider in the United States.

The CenturyLink historical timeline is available at:

<http://www.centurylink.com/Pages/AboutUs/CompanyInformation/TimeLine/>

Adventures in Yonkers, (continued)

By Ken McLaughlin

As you may recall, Ken wrote a story about his adventures in Yonkers helping New York Bell while workers were on strike in 1971. This is the second part of that story.

Many of the buildings where I helped customers were five story walk-ups (no elevator). The apartments stretched from the front to the back, with long narrow living quarters, and the staircase in the front middle. I received a trouble ticket from a woman who had extended the telephone wire from the front to the back under the carpet and by walking on it over several years she had knocked off the insulation and shorted out her line. I noticed that it was hot in her apartment as I peeled off my coat and sweater. It had to be over 90°. I asked her about the heat. She said she did not have any heat last week, so this week she was making up for it.



Mill Creek, a small stream, runs through Yonkers. Behind the tenement buildings was an area full of trash, car fenders and tires. I had a case where the ground level had accumulated

enough dirt in the back of buildings to build up and bury the protectors.

On one occasion several people complained of having no dial tone at the five story walk-up. The basement terminal was open to all: rats, bums and debris. The terminal was entirely obliterated. Some nut had taken a hammer and hit it about 500 times, leaving nothing but hammer marks and dangling wires. I was a little nervous, to say the least. I called for splicing help to place a new terminal. To my relief, they arrived very soon and spliced in a new terminal. Then the sons-of-a-guns left me alone to ring out each subscriber in the building. I was able to identify a phone on nine of the ten apartments. So I left with the person in unit seven still out of service.

A week later I was given a trouble ticket dispatch to that unit. I knocked on the door and a disheveled man opened it with some difficulty, because he had garbage about three feet deep throughout his flat. He told me he was mad at his landlord and was hauling trash back from his job as a garbage collector. He said his phone was gone and he showed me where it had been connected. The baseboard looked just like the basement terminal area, with hammer marks. Aha, our culprit! He said he was from Ireland and was sad that he was 2,000 miles from home, with Christmas season approaching. He was also concerned about the striking telephone employees. He was a basket case. He looked like he needed a good meal, so I treated him to brunch at a nearby diner.

I also felt sorry for the striking employees. We were able to take a cab in the evening by just signing on a clipboard in the taxi. If the driver was clean-

cut, you could almost guarantee that he was a striking employee.

I went to one place that had a stuffed nanny goat hanging on the wall. I asked him what it was and was told it was a goat from an island and that it was very difficult to hunt. I told him to come out west where we hang big varmints on the wall. He told me that he had been out West, and it was lonely and desolate. I guess that if you like lots of people and different kinds of people, New York is the place to be.

New York is not all bad. At one repair job I had the pleasure of listening to a beautiful aria, sung by an unseen female opera singer. I lingered there as long as it seemed proper.



On another job I talked to an Irish immigration officer, who gave me hints on dealing with different races and ethnic backgrounds. He also told me that I looked just like a police officer, with my three quarter length coat and my tool pouch protruding from the bottom. Many times, when I walked down the hallways in the projects at night, loitering people would seem to just vaporize. At times, when the folks were noisy and rowdy, I would be more circumspect and creep around in the

dark. I would then use my mouth-held pen light to do my work.



In tenement areas, Bell placed poles about fifty feet apart with fifty pair terminals behind the buildings.

The aerial service wires radiating from these poles went to all floors and all

buildings. A building being wrecked fell on a pole and cable. It tore lots of wires off or out of the buildings, and many wires out of the terminal. The unusual thing was that only the pole came down, the wires hung up at the second story level and looked like a huge cobweb. It took several days to sort out which flats each wires pulled out of to repair them. We would carry our drop-wire spool up to the proper apartment, drill a hole in the wall, and then poke out enough wire to reach the new pole. We would lace them through the existing wires, so that they would not rub on each other.

I had heard horror stories about NY Bell's central office frames, where they connect central office equipment to the outside plant. The technicians never pulled out an unused wire. The wires built up so thick it was difficult to place another wire.

This also happened in the outside plant. Feeder-cable pair served cross-connects on poles to the distribution cables. Because no one pulled out the old wires, the cross connect boxes became so packed that you could not get the doors closed. This contributed to additional weather related troubles. The

out-of-town supervisors corrected this condition and any other potential problems when they were up a pole. Eventually we ran out of problems to fix.



On Thanksgiving I ate at the Empire Room in the basement of the Empire State Building. I checked my coat and had a good meal. Afterward on the train to Yonkers, I shook two roaches out of my coat.

When I arrived at Yonkers at midnight, I called a cab. There were bums sleeping in the station and a loud bar across the street. While I was waiting for my taxi on the street level, a woman in a panic came running up to me and said she could not get her car started. She wanted me to help. About that time, my taxi pulled up.

She said, "Forget the cab and I'll take you to your motel."

I said, "OK let's give it a try." I noticed that her shift lever was in drive. I put the lever in park and it started right up. She drove me in a circuitous route to the motel, because she would not drive through the warehouse section of Yonkers, where the NY Bell garage was located.

We had things under control by mid-December, and they released us early so that we could be home for Christmas. I spent my birthday, December 24, on a thirteen hour bus ride because my local airline was on strike.

Facebook Phone Flop



According to 24/7 Wall Street (247wallst.com), one of the top ten worst product flops of 2011 was the HTC Status

Facebook phone. In June of this year, AT&T announced the HTC Status, the first, and (according to 24/7 Wall Street) likely the last, smartphone with a dedicated Facebook share button. At the time of its launch, AT&T hoped it would be incredibly popular among Facebook users.

"We can't wait to put the HTC Status in the hands of our young customers who will waste no time tapping into Facebook to update their friends," said AT&T Senior VP of Devices, AT&T Mobility and Consumer Markets **Jeff Bradley** in a statement.

But sales were significantly lower than the company had originally expected, and rumors that the phone would be discontinued quickly spread. Given the ease with which users can access Facebook on other smartphones, the case for owning the Status was not very strong.

Despite its low sales, AT&T has defended its product, stating, "The HTC Status is a great product and our plans for it to be part of our portfolio haven't changed."

Me and Rocky Flats

By John Swartley

Not long after I transferred to the key installation group, my supervisor asked me if he could apply for my security clearance so I could work at the Rocky Flats complex. Rocky Flats was a large Government installation east of Boulder, Colorado. At the time it was managed by Dow Chemical; they built triggers for nuclear bombs. It required a clearance to enter and there were some areas they assigned guards to be with you. In my own opinion I really believe they did not want the public to know about the amount of money they were spending instead of keeping all the nuclear secrets from the Russians. The FBI interviewed me and also my Mother back in Garden City. She called in a panic wondering if I was going to jail for some reason.



Most of the other key installers did not like working there for some reason. Being the youngest on the crew, it was not long before I was assigned to report there every morning. I would grab my orders, join the rest of the crew for coffee and then head to Rocky Flats. All the orders were issued by the Mountain

Bell Government Services department. The department at Rocky Flats that needed phone work done would issue a work order. In all the buildings except the office buildings a conduit was required to be installed by their electricians for each telephone cable. The electricians would consult me where to run the conduit. This made my installation very easy and I would complete the job long before the paperwork hit my boss's desk, so I was always ahead of my work orders due date.

Rocky Flats was an interesting place to work. There were very large buildings that required a lot of walking to work any order, I would borrow carts to haul my equipment to each project. In the areas where they actually worked with plutonium, I would change into the coveralls they issued and take as few tools as I could into the area. We never removed equipment from these areas. We would fill out a lost equipment form and they would put the equipment into their boxes to be sealed and shipped somewhere for storage. One time I exited one the areas and an alarm went off. They made me go back, shower and then they retested me. Having the showers and lockers in all these building worked great for me. One summer I was remodeling an old house and was renting a small house without indoor plumbing. I would come to work dirty from remodeling; go out to the plant and shower first thing. Not many people go home cleaner than they were coming to work.

Since all of these areas were top secret, there were guards and guard towers everywhere. The buildings had all kinds of alarms and I was always setting one off for some reason. I was usually on a ladder when I did and it

wasn't long before there would be either a group of firemen or guards standing looking up at me. They didn't mind because they were bored and it gave them something to do. When work was slack I would sit in the guard shack and shoot the breeze with the guards. A couple of times my supervisor, Ted Copland would come looking for me and all the guards would keep me informed as to where he was while driving around the complex.



Glove box at Rocky Flats

In 1969, they had one of the largest industrial fires U S history at that time. One of the glove boxes they were handling plutonium in caught on fire and released some plutonium into the air. From the outside of the building you couldn't see any damage. Press helicopters flew overhead and there were all kinds of reporters trying to get in to report on the fire.

They slowly started cleaning the plutonium and glove lines up. They would close off a section with plastic and 2x4 studs, expanding the area as they cleaned. I would install temporary telephones in these areas. When they

finished cleaning the building, they painted everything battleship gray. The first time I entered the freshly painted building, I lost my equilibrium and had to touch the walls to recover because everything was the same color. In time they started painting all the pipes and etc different colors which solved the problem. All the waste material was put into sealed steel barrels, then placed in 4x8 foot $\frac{3}{4}$ inch plywood boxes lined with plastic. All of the plywood crates were shipped to Utah for storage in their nuclear storage facilities. I would almost cry as I watched them place new tools, telephones and other expensive equipment into the barrels; it was all contaminated and could not be reused.

One summer Western Electric was installing some equipment for their step PBX. The installers allowed me to watch and showed me how to read all the wiring diagrams. This helped a lot when I was transferred to the PBX department for the company. While I was assigned at Rocky Flats I did not do any maintenance or repair on the PBX, but I did learn a lot. After I transferred into the PBX crew I did go back a few times to work on the switch but very seldom; the older PBX installers had turned it into a "gravy train" for themselves.



Dumping nuclear waste

I enjoyed working at Rocky Flats. I soon turned it into my type of working environment with no supervisors to bother me. I was always working ahead of my order due date so there was no pressure to get the work done. I learned where all the terminals were located and had a good working relationship with everyone at the plant and they were happy customers. It was probably the best working condition in my career. Why did I give it up? An opening in the PBX crew allowed me to receive a pay raise; there was no challenge left; and I wondered if I would start "glowing in the dark" from being exposed to all the nuclear stuff they were testing.



In 1989, after I had transferred to Steamboat Springs, the FBI and the EPA served a warrant to gain access to Rocky Flats and all their records. It didn't take them long to realize how contaminated the area was and declared it eligible for their Superfund Cleanup program. The government fired the contractor Dow Chemical and replaced them with Rockwell International to clean the place up. In 1993, Rockwell and other large companies started closing down the

operation. After untold millions of dollars of tax money, they have either removed or buried the entire nuclear residue and it is now a wildlife refuge. The area will always remain a wildlife area because the land is too contaminated for any other kind of development.



Now as I travel down Highway 93 to Boulder, I look across the prairie grass meadow and have a hard time believing at one time there was a large complex called Rocky Flats there. I remember driving during the 70s through all the war protesters camped out at the entrance; the huge buildings that I walked many miles in; all the employees I worked with and the friends I had made doing it. Most of all the truck-loads of crates will be stored somewhere in Utah until the end of time.

The Rocky Flats experience was a short time in my exciting career with the Bell System, but I still have a lot of fond memories.



We wish all of you a happy, peaceful and prosperous New Year.