



# Dial Log



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[www.telcomhistory.org](http://www.telcomhistory.org)  
Jody Georgeson, editor.

## Director's Message

I am so grateful that spring has arrived, even though there's still a little snow on the ground here in Denver. The flowers are starting to spring forth and this is always a time when fun things start happening.

In Denver we are preparing to participate once again in Doors Open Denver (DOD). For those who aren't familiar, this is an annual two-day event that provides opportunities for residents and visitors to explore our city, creating meaningful connections to the built environment and promoting quality design. DOD tells the story of where Denver is, where it has been and where it's going. We are honored to have the 931 14<sup>th</sup> St. CenturyLink building as one of the expert-guided tours and we would love to see you there.

Tickets go fast, so be sure to visit the web site at <http://doorsopendenver.com/> and mark your calendar for the weekend of April 23 & 24. If you're not able to make it that weekend, call us at 303-296-1221 to schedule a tour for another time. We have a new exhibit of advertising that will take you down memory lane.

The volunteers at the Herbert H. Warrick, Jr. Museum of Communications in Seattle are doing some extensive spring cleaning and we are very excited to see the fresh look once it is complete. Be sure to stop by to check out their progress any Sunday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The museum is located at 7000 East Marginal Way South, Seattle, Washington, 98108.

I mentioned in the last issue that we've been doing some strategic planning. The Board accepted the plan and we are moving forward with our action items. We're working on integrating the operations of our Denver and Seattle locations to improve efficiencies and maximize our resources. We are always looking for volunteers in both locations to help us archive photos and documents, conduct inventory, or assist in creating new programs and services. Be sure to give us a call and we will put you to work. Happy Spring!

Warm regards,  
Lisa Berquist

## THG Board of Directors

THG's Board provides voluntary service in the form of oversight and management of the organization. They are instrumental in the planning, development and fundraising that supports our efforts to preserve the history of the telecommunications industry.

Stephen Jones and Jo Lynne Whiting, both valued members of the board, resigned in the past year. We're sad to see them go, but wish them both continued success. We are happy to welcome several new members – Peter Amstein, Lori De Bois, Roger Christensen, Jody Georgeson, Phil Grate, Mary Retka, and Cliff Stice.

Shea, Jack President	Executive Director (ret.), Benefits - U S West
Nearing, Michael W. Vice President	Senior Engineer - CenturyLink
Darrow, John C. Secretary	Senior Software Developer (ret.) - Qwest
Christensen, Roger Treasurer	Executive VP & Chief Administrative Officer-MediaOne
Amstein, Peter	Seattle, Washington
Barger, Marsha Lane	Seattle, Washington – Retired
DeMuth, Laurence W. Jr.	EVP, General Counsel & Secretary (ret.) - U S West, Inc.
Dintenfass, David	Owner/Operator, Full-Track Productions
Doerr, Howard P.	EVP/CFO (ret.) - U S West, Inc.
DeBois, Lori A.	Marketing Troubadour
Georgeson, Jody	THG Executive Director (ret.)
Grate, Phil	Seattle, CenturyLink
Hensley Eckert, Lisa	Director of Public Affairs, CenturyLink
Herbolich, John J.	Telecommunications Director-Network (ret.) U S West Inc.
Laird, Pamela W.	Professor, Business History – U C Denver
Mattson, Edwin	Seattle, Washington- Medical Director -retired
McClellan, Scott	VP Washington (ret.) Qwest
McKenna, Robert	Assoc. General Counsel (ret.) CenturyLink
Retka, Mary	Director, Network Policy-CenturyLink
Sandquist, Ted	Director (ret.), Public Relations - U S West, Inc.
Stice, Cliff	Chief Operating Officer – Telenet (Belgium)



### Who the Heck is this?

From time to time, we receive photographs with no identifying marks. If you know who any of these people are, please contact us at 303-296-1221 or [telcomhist@aol.com](mailto:telcomhist@aol.com).



## “NO ONE WILL EVER USE IT”

### Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds at Home in 1877

MRS.: “It’s a telephone? Connected to your office? What do I say?”

MR.: “Oh . . . say hello when the chief clerk answers . . . then whatever you please.”

MRS.: “Hello . . . hello . . . is this the office? (turning to her husband) I can’t hear much of anything . . . it sounds like someone crying.”

MR.: “My dear, you mustn’t be too critical. Of course it sounds strange at first.”

MRS.: “Well, I don’t think much of it. No one will ever use it.”

MR.: “Mark my words, Mary; the time will come when we will use it to talk out of town . . . perhaps even to distant cities.”

MRS.: “Oh, John, you’re such a dreamer! Distant Cities!”

(From the motion picture “FAR SPEAKING”)

If the Reynolds were here in 1941, they would laugh at their conversation of 64 years ago—for today, (in normal times), their telephone could be connected to any one of 93% of the world’s 44,000,000 telephones.

**The Mountain States Telephone & Telegraph Co.**



## Elitch Theatre

This ad ran in the 1941 50th anniversary program for the Historic Elitch Gardens Theatre. Built in 1890, (completed in 1891) the theatre has been described as “one of the cradles of American drama.” The stage has hosted such stars as Grace Kelly, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., Cybil Shepard, Vincent Price, and many more.

The theatre was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 and locally landmarked by the City of Denver in 1995. In 1991, a 100-year anniversary production was held in the theatre, the last performance given on its stage. 2016 will be the Elitch Theatre’s 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Since 2006 the Historic Elitch Gardens Theatre Foundation (a non-profit organization) has worked hard to restore the old theatre. Thanks to federal, state, and city grants and private donations, structural improvements have been made, major code compliance and fire suppression issues resolved, and the exterior restored.

Now the Foundation is working on lobby renovations and installing restrooms. Once this phase is completed they will be able to get their permanent occupancy permit and begin regular programming. This year they are planning a year full of celebration and events, while continuing the countless other tasks needed to restore the theatre to its previous beauty.

As THG members, you understand how important it is to save our historical assets. The Foundation is looking for lots of advertisers in their collectible 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Program, and they are always looking for volunteers and donors. Please see their web site at <https://historichelitchtheatre.org/>

## PERSON TO PERSON

By Don Warsavage

Today, the recorded voice rings with sincerity when we hear: "Your call is very important to us. Press one if..."

But, one day, back in the nineteen-sixties, Frieda Lawhon was at her job as a telephone operator working for Northwestern Bell in Pierre, South Dakota. Pierre was the toll center serving the smaller towns in that part of the state. It had been a pretty routine day for her when she noticed a payphone light blink on. It was from the little town of Onida. Frieda plugged into the light expecting to go through the routine of asking the customer to deposit the correct number of nickels, dimes or quarters.

Instead, an excited man said, "I have a problem here! And I don't know who else to call!"

"Sir? This is the operator."

"I've got my family here. We're just trying to get home. I've lost my wallet!"

The man was talking fast. It took Frieda a little while to calm him. He explained that he had taken his family on a vacation. They were on their way home to Wisconsin. They'd stopped in Onida for gas when he'd discovered his missing wallet. They'd searched everywhere in the car.

Frieda asked, "Do you remember where you used it last?"

"Well, yeah. I think it was about eighty miles or so back down the road. We ate lunch in a little restaurant there. The town had a funny name...Presto or something." He paused. "Don't remember the name of the restaurant at all."

Frieda knew the town was Presho, South Dakota. And she had been in Hutch's Restaurant there many times. It was the only restaurant in the town.

She was also aware of the increasing number lights on the switchboard. Other customers were demanding service.

"Just a moment, sir," she said.

Frieda hurriedly looked up the number for Hutch's Restaurant in Presho, then



called. She questioned the man who answered but he said no wallet had been turned in. Frieda persisted, and asked him to look outside in the parking lot. Cords crisscrossed her board because she was holding the pay phone caller as well as the restaurant phone and while that was going on, she handled a few of the accumulating calls for irritated customers.

The man returned and he did, indeed, find a wallet lying in the parking lot. Frieda patched in the man on the payphone so



he could listen to the man from Presho describe the wallet and the ID inside.

“That’s it! That’s my wallet!”

Excited words of relief, warmth and gratitude travelled down the wires to fill Frieda’s headset as the man told her he was headed back to “Presto.” Frieda then started picking up more calls as she continued doing the job she sometimes loved.

Frieda is eighty-five years young, still living in Pierre where she recounts the telephone stories of the South Dakota storm breaks where operators were called in to cover the switchboards during their infamous blizzards. The Hotel St. Charles there kept several rooms available for the telephone people who’d come in to deal with increased service demands from the storm. She’s proud of her twenty-five years’ service and of the volunteer work she and Telephone Pioneers have done together in Pierre.

Frieda and those like her were able to use the amazing technology of their day to tie us all a little closer together...and with a touch of grace...person to person.

### **What happened . . .**

**100 years ago** – On March 9, 1916, Pancho Villa invaded Columbus, NM. Operator Susan Parks risked her life by staying at her switchboard to contact General Pershing’s forces.



**75 years ago** – A telephone office to serve Camp Edwards, Massachusetts was completed three months after breaking ground for the project. Many camps for the U. S. Armed Forces were built from the ground up during World War II. Within months, a city of 40,000 to 50,000 men would spring up (often in sparsely populated areas), creating a tremendous need for new telephone service, both within the camp and in the surrounding towns which served them.

**50 years ago** – North American Air Defense (NORAD facilities in Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado were placed in service by the Bell System. Heading up the team was a young Mountain States Telephone manager named Bob Timothy. (You can read all about him in our Virtual Museum at <http://www.telcomhistory.org/vm/heroesTimothy.shtml>)

## The Gingham Girl

The Frederick H. Reid Chapter  
and  
Columbine Council  
Telephone Pioneers of America

Present

**THE GINGHAM GIRL**  
A Musical Comedy



Commemorating Our 35th Anniversary



Denver City Auditorium Theatre  
March 19, 20, 21, 1958

The 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Frederick H. Reid Chapter of the Telephone Pioneers was cause for numerous celebrations. One of the most festive was the presentation of a musical comedy, *The Gingham Girl*. Produced and acted (and sung) entirely by Pioneer members, it was presented at the Denver City Auditorium Theatre and was free to all telephone company employees -- "tired and "retired" -- and their families and friends.

We were recently given a scrapbook by Mrs. Eleanor Alt, who played Mildred Ripley in the three-act play. Eleanor was General Office Staff Assistant-Buildings and Vehicles, and her scrapbook also contains valuable documents about her activities in that capacity.



"Gingham Girls" Cast

# We dug and refilled a 4000-mile trench to protect 9300 communications circuits against disaster

*This story is from a 1965 Bell System ad.*

We split the continent with a trench four feet deep to give the United States its first blast-resistant coast-to-coast underground communications system.

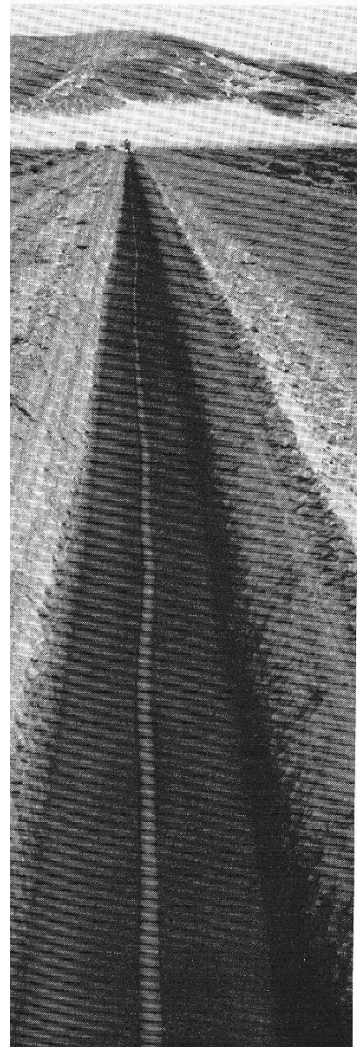
More than four years ago when the first of 2500 giant reels of coaxial cable started unrolling in new York State, we began an important project that will give added protection to the nation's vital communications.

Today, 9300 circuits – available for voice, data, teletypewriter, telephoto – are included on this route. It stretches across 19 states and has 950 buried reinforced concrete repeater (or amplifying) stations.

Spotted strategically along the route about 50 feet below ground level are 11 manned test centers. Also of reinforced concrete, they have automatic air filtration and ventilation and living quarters stocked with emergency food and water.

This vital transcontinental link will serve the needs of government agencies, businesses and individuals.

This is a job that needed the Bell System's unified research, manufacturing and operating capabilities. It is another implementation of a basic Bell System policy: "In communications, the defense of the nation comes first."



***THG has mounted an exhibit of historical advertising in the foyer of our museum at 931 14<sup>th</sup> St. in Denver. To view this entertaining and informative exhibit, contact us for a tour of the museum and/or the building at 303-296-1221 or [telcomhist@aol.com](mailto:telcomhist@aol.com).***







**THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS HISTORY GROUP, INC**