



Dial Log



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Jody Georgeson, editor

A Note From Our Director

We've had a busy quarter including giving tours to over 50 children of CenturyLink employees for *Take Your Child to Work Day*, and having a sold out *Doors Open Denver* event. A big thanks to all those who helped make these events a success.



We are proud to announce the winners of the *Colorado National History Day* special award for Best Project on a Telecommunications Topic sponsored by the Telecommunications History Group. The winners are **Emilie Harold** and **Keren Sneh** for their website *Bell Labs: Leadership in the Electronics Community and a Legacy of Innovation*. Check out their winning project at <http://18187174.nhd.weebly.com>. National History Day (NHD) is a year-long academic program focused on historical research for 6th to 12th grade students and the THG Archives is honored to be an available resource.

There's still time to check out our artifacts on loan to the Lakewood Heritage Center at 801 S. Yarrow Blvd in Lakewood, CO. The exhibit *Communications in the 20th Century* is open through August.

We would like to welcome two new Board members to THG. **Brian Betterman** with Wells Fargo and **Phil Grate** with CenturyLink joined the Board in

March 2015. Welcome to both.

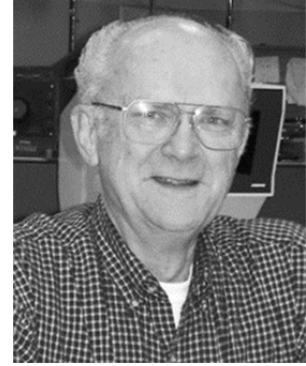
If you are looking for something fun and different to do this summer, we would love to have you join us as a volunteer. Just give us a call at 303-296-1221 and let us know when you are available. Enjoy your summer.

Warm regards,
Lisa Berquist

Remembering Don Ostrand By Dave Dintenfass



Don, 1956



Don at the Museum, 2002

It's been nearly a year and half since we lost Don Ostrand here at the Seattle museum. Don was a 34-year employee of the former Pacific Northwest Bell. He worked many jobs from 1956 until his retirement in 1990 as a second-level manager. Following his retirement, Don had a long second career here at the **Herbert H. Warrick Jr. Museum of Communications.**

Don's death on 15 January 2014 was a profound and irreplaceable loss to both our volunteer staff and to our regular visitors. Not only was Don a constant presence here at the museum, but he was involved in nearly every aspect of museum operations and served as its founding curator since our opening as The Vintage Telephone Equipment Museum in July 1988. From the beginning, Don worked closely with Herb Warrick (then Pacific Northwest Bell Director, Network Engineering), the man who promoted the idea of a Telephone Pioneer museum here in Seattle back in 1984.

Don was instrumental in coordinating the large team of volunteers (mostly drawn from the Charles B. Hopkins No. 30 Telephone Pioneers of America chapter here in Seattle) required for this very large multiyear project. Although our formal association with the Pioneers ended in 2002 when the museum became part of the Telecommunications History Group, some of the original Pioneer volunteers continue to serve at the museum. That the museum continues to open every week for public tours is tribute to the thirty years of dedication on behalf of its volunteers.

Don Ostrand was, by all accounts, one of the hardest-working volunteers ever. Our initial estimates were that Don put in more than 25,000 volunteer hours over 26 years at the museum but we now think it was likely twice that—or possibly even more. Don built (or gathered and assembled) many of our museum displays as well as nearly all the shelving at our storage facility. He also reached out and coordinated with many of those with whom he had worked over the years to assist us here at the museum, particularly in the earlier years. Don was also responsible for so many of the unheralded and behind-the-scenes tasks that, in any organization, are never obvious but are always vitally important.

Here at the museum, we were always impressed with Don's technical expertise and his uncanny ability to size up a situation and find useful workarounds when they ran into unexpected trouble—one might say Don was the consummate "crew chief" as well as an incredibly resourceful and hardworking leader. Much of Don's resourcefulness stemmed from his youth on the family homestead where he learned to make do with what was available at hand. Don was an excellent auto mechanic and as such, was the prime mover behind the Line Truck project (*more about this in our autumn issue*).

Don was “old school” in the very best sense of the phrase. He treated all people fairly and was diplomatic and helpful even when dealing with difficult people. Don never talked much about his many skills—he just used them as needed and generously shared them as he helped others.

Don was born on 7 August 1937 to Ernest and Martha Ostrand and was raised on his great-grandfather's 1883 homestead on Manzanita Bay on Bainbridge Island (just across Puget Sound from Seattle). All four of Don's grandparents spoke Swedish and were from the western coast of Finland. Don maintained a lifelong interest in the unique history of Swede-Finns and was a member of the Seattle-based Swedish Finn Historical Society since its founding in 1990.

Don was also associated with the Boy Scouts for many years (Don's sons Todd and Dane were also active in scouting). Don and fellow museum volunteer John Berkman also used their considerable telco expertise to install telephone systems at various Boy Scout camps here in Washington State using Crossbar PBXs donated by PNB.

Don is survived by his wife, Sandra West, and his sons Todd and Dane Ostrand and daughter Maria Ostrand Card, as well as many extended family members.

On a more personal note, I got to know Don quite well as we both lived in Ballard, a neighborhood about five miles north of downtown Seattle. After I became self-employed and began volunteering at the museum in 1999, Don would frequently tap me for “special projects” outside our normal operating hours since I lived only a few blocks away. Not infrequently, this would involve travels in his 1969 Chevy pickup truck (complete with cable boom) to retrieve orphaned equipment or to make deliveries to our storage facility. A good pair of work gloves was most definitely required on these outings!



Don fishing, 2013

Many of us can remember moving heavy switchboards up the outside stairwell with Don's orange appliance dolly. Don was the hardest-working fellow I've ever met and it wasn't always easy even for younger volunteers to keep up with Don. Don did enjoy relaxing on occasion, and an annual cherished occasion would be a trip to the Olympic Peninsula for salmon fishing with his son Dane.

Don and his wife Sandra also volunteered one day a week at the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks, helping to tend its extensive botanical gardens. Known locally as “the Ballard Locks,” this famous site here in Seattle is operated by the US Army Corp of Engineers and connects the waters of Lake Washington, Lake Union, and Salmon Bay to the tidal waters of Puget Sound. Don and Sandra very much enjoyed summer band concerts at the locks and would be sure to attend on those days when the concert band (in which I play clarinet) would perform.

We miss Don and we know that his family does as well. Speaking on behalf of the museum, we were just so fortunate to have Don leading us for so many years. As a tribute to Don, we urge those of you who can to visit our museum here in Seattle or make a contribution in memory of Don.

Mountain Bell Training Center

Ever wonder what happened to the training center at 3898 S. Teller Street in Lakewood, Colorado? A lot of us spent many hours there learning our various telecom trades while working for Mountain Bell, U S West and/or Qwest. Now it is owned by the Denver Christian Schools, who just celebrated the beginning of their 100th year.

To prepare for the next 100 years, the PK - 12th grade private school sold its three campuses in the Denver metro area and opened one, new, modern, state of the art campus after almost 100 years in the city of Denver. Over 99% of Denver Christian Schools high school students graduate, and approximately 95% go on to higher education.

"I don't know that there are many schools that have been continuous for nearly a hundred years," Denver Christian Schools CEO Todd Lanting remarked. He says the new facility will allow the school to expand from around 400 students to up to 1,000 in the next 10 years.

"We build on top of that foundation," Lanting said. "Things like state-of-the-art technology, emphasis on foreign language, and, of course, college preparatory."

It's nice to know that the buildings will continue to be an educational facility.



Denver Christian Schools celebrates their 100 year at their new campus in Lakewood, April 16, 2015.

Renee's Renaissance

By Herb Hackenburg

Back in the '90s (the 1990s that is) when the Telecommunications History Group was young and poor, the THG Board of Directors authorized me to attend a three-day seminar for business archivists and historians which was being held in Milwaukee and sponsored by Harley-Davidson Motorcycles. Two things at the seminar really struck home with me. One was a two-hour presentation by the corporate historian for Coke. At the Coca-Cola Company, founded in 1886, its history department contributes to the company's bottom line and controls the company trademarks. The company's museum gift shop, which sells quality copies of historic memorabilia (metal serving trays, "Coke-curved" drinking glasses, and posters), makes a profit every year. By the way, the "traditional" Santa Clause we all know and love is a jolly old fellow designed by the Coke Company.

The second thing was a field trip we took to the Harley-Davidson factory, which houses the company's history department which is not open to the public. At the time the HD history group consisted of two full-time historians, two of the world's best motorcycle mechanics, and a "rookie" archivist. The archivist had told his boss that the company's photograph collection would be better preserved if it was stored in the cool, dark place. A week later, a walk-in meat locker was installed.

The best thing about the Harley-Davidson operation is that their archive had one working model of every single motorcycle the company ever made. In addition there are a few "one-of-a-kind" models, such as the "Levi" where the "denim" was hand painted and the gas cap was a big copper rivet; and the Harley NATO combat bike made to be dropped 30 to 40 feet from a helicopter (no parachute) and be ready to go when the first soldier got on and started it.

The other two archives on our tour were more like most archives, shelves with archive boxes neatly stored and properly identified, work tables and computer stations.

After the seminar I thought that THG had the responsibility for at least one operating museum and an archive. It also really hit me that the industry THG was processing was big-time historically significant to the world, the nation and the communications industry. Even scarier, the telephone industry is big. VERY BIG.

Actually, the size of THG's job didn't really scare me. After returning from the seminar, I went out of THG's back door (at the time our back door opened to a huge storage space belonging to the US WEST main mail room). Most of the room was filled with pallets of Northwestern Bell, Mountain Bell and Pacific Northwest Bell history: six tons of Bell System Practices; ledgers full of hand-written customer records; board meeting minutes from small-town phone companies and farmer-owned lines; and all sorts of other stuff. . . *[editor's note – "stuff" is a technical archives term, not to be confused with "crap."]* I estimated about 50 tons in all.

I thought, "We've got a solid group of volunteers and a great and well connected board of directors and the time to do this. We'll just get it done." And I did learn some things about running an archive at the seminar. And after Jody joined THG, she really professionalized the THG archive operations.

With me, however, the major result of the seminar was a small thing. I felt that the THG archive should not be pristine, bland and dull. THG had earned its spurs at

U S West as the “keeper of phone company history.” This included the ownership and responsibility of a museum and historical displays scattered all over the company. That meant we had a lot of “stuff.” Good stuff. Our little museum was already full of good stuff, so why not put the best of our extra stuff on display in the archive. And that’s what we began to do. When Renee Lang joined THG (first as a volunteer, then as executive secretary) she took over the archive’s “display of stuff.”

In our latest and best archive, hundreds of items are on display, even though 90% of our shelving space is being used to house boxes full of fully processed material -- examined, cleaned, properly filed and entered into the THG database.

Now on nearly every Wednesday I show up at THG to do my volunteer work. But first I walk around the archive to discover what “new” old things Renee has on display. It’s actually one of my favorite things to do. Yes, I’m weird that way—besides, I donated some of the stuff.

Just so you get an idea what I’m talking about, I took a pen and a note pad with me on today’s walk. Here is a partial list of what I saw on display:

Ten PBX boards (including two very small and very old boards), two test boards, two historic picture phones, two phone booths (one fully operational, one undergoing restoration), 118 individual telephones (including an Italian-made “stone” phone—made from onyx with 18-carat gold trim.)

My walk-around isn’t over. I see nine coin phones, 27 phone company signs, 12 telephone-shaped whiskey bottles, 70 cell phones, 76 telephone-related coffee cups, 77 insulators (including milk glass, cobalt blue, carnival glass and an “Arizona pink” that no one seems to know what it is made of), 67 ornamental phones (salt and pepper shakers, cookie jars, candy dishes, Avon bottles, etc.).

The walk continues. Manhole covers, one regular, one small (17 inches in diameter), four building signs (one from Western Electric’s New York City headquarters), two early car phones, assorted old phone company stock certificates (THG has the country’s largest phone company stock certificate collection), 88 telephone-related toys, 32 refrigerator magnets (little phones, phone booths, coin phones, etc.), 19 hard hats, and --in the archive’s non-smoking, smoking area—12 lighters and eight ash trays. THG would really like to acquire a Bell System issue spittoon.

Even with all of the “stuff” above, I’ve probably only listed 60% of the items. It’s been a long walk; I’ll go rest now.

32 refrigerator magnets



Telefontornet

In the late 19th century, the race was on to connect everyone to the phone grid. However, due to technical limitations, every telephone required its own physical line to be strung between a house or business to an exchange where the call was manually connected by an operator. In order to accommodate so many lines, elaborate and unsightly towers were constructed to carry thousands of phone lines.



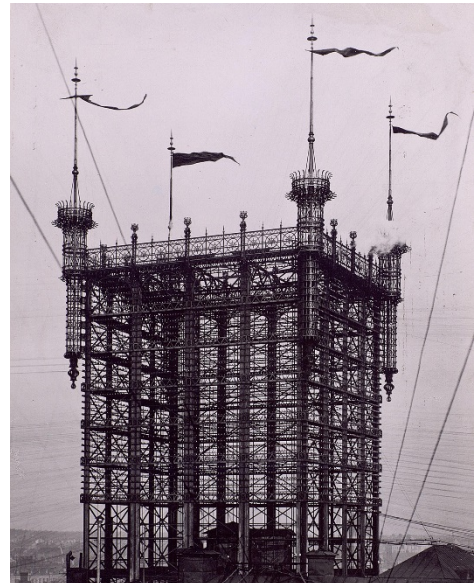
In Stockholm, Sweden in 1887 the Stockholms Allmänna Telefon AB ordered the construction of a tower that connected about 5,500 telephone lines. This quadrangular metallic structure, 80 meters tall, was so ugly that the company asked architect Fritz Eckert to beautify it. He designed the four angle towers.

The network was extremely vulnerable to the elements, including ice storms, high winds and fires.

Phone networks evolved rapidly and by 1913 the Telefontornet was completely decommissioned in favor of much simpler technology involving star networks and buried cables.



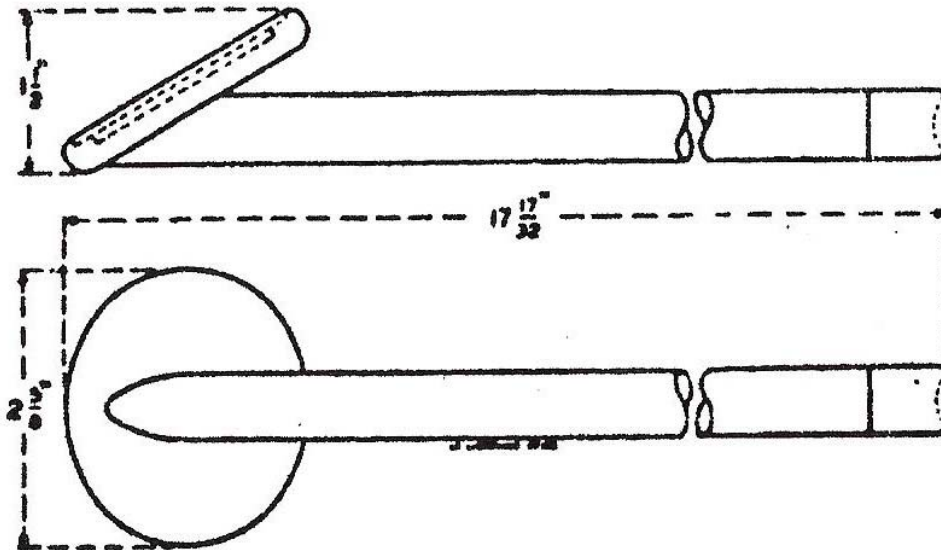
The remaining shell stood as a landmark until it caught fire on July 23, 1952 and was torn down the following year.



*All photos are from the Tekniska Museet (the Museum of Technology) in Stockholm, Sweden.
www.tekniskamuseet.se/*

What is it?

Herb recently brought us this interesting artifact. Actually, we've had one for years, but didn't know what it was or how it was used. Now we do.....do you?



According to the Western Electric Catalog, 1942, it's a No.1A Listening Stick; "A wooden rod with a disc at one end which supports a wooden diaphragm with an air chamber beneath. Mahogany finish. Intended for use at duplex end repeater sets, to enable an attendant to determine the action of an instrument regardless of the general noise from surrounding instruments."

We all (THG volunteers) tried it out, and I'll be darned if it doesn't work. It's kind of the Bell System's take on a glass against the wall.

#2 What is it?

109

Form 62-1024-4-30-88. M. P. Co.

THE COLORADO TELEPHONE CO.

Denver, Oct 2 1897

N. C. Merrill

Please pay to bearer 404

for interview with Hagan
Buller

THE COLORADO TELEPHONE CO.

#1070

Bob Henry brought us a little mystery the other day. These little (vouchers? receipts?) are all made out to N. C Merrill, "for interview with ____." They range in date from 1895-1898, and from 25 to 50 cents. It's Colorado Telephone Company Form # 62. The dimensions are 3 3/8" x 3 5/8".

Bob's theory (the best we've come up with so far) is that they were payment for employment leads by the N.C. Merrill employment agency. But we can't substantiate that. It's a mystery!

13

Form 62-106 M-M. P. Co.-7-1-97.

THE COLORADO TELEPHONE CO.

Denver, MAR 2 1898

N. C. Merrill

Please pay to bearer 50c

for interview with Rogers
W. J. ...

THE COLORADO TELEPHONE CO.

Per ...

Drop us a line at telcomhist@aol.com or call us on 303-296-1221 if you have any ideas. We'll publish the answers in the next Dial-Log.

Until then, have a safe and adventure-filled Summer!



THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS HISTORY GROUP, INC