



TELECOMMUNICATIONS
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Jody Georgeson, editor

Director's Message

2017 was a bittersweet year for us at the Telecommunications History Group. We lost several friends and supporters that had a great impact on telecommunications. Early this year we saw the passing of our first THG Board President, Howard Doerr. Several months later another past THG Board member, Tom Lindblom, died. Long-time volunteer Dale Norblom died in June, and in September we lost one of our dearest friends, Robert K. Timothy. They all will be missed; and we feel honored to have known them and to have experienced their impact on the industry.

On a lighter note, we have seen progress at THG and are excited to announce that new signage for our Connections Museum Seattle is in place. Thanks to the board members and volunteers that made that long-held vision come to fruition. Stop by and visit the museum when you are in Seattle and let us know what you think about the signs.

We celebrated our cherished volunteers with a BBQ in Seattle and a luncheon in Denver. We appreciate all the hard work and dedication of our volunteers. We can always use more help so if you have time this winter, be sure to contact our Seattle location at 206-767-3012 or our Denver location at 303-296-1221.

We wish you all a joyous Holiday Season and a Happy 2018.

Warm regards,

Lisa Berquist
THG Executive Director

In Memory – Robert K. Timothy, 1918-2017

Robert “Bob” Timothy died peacefully September 29, 2017.

Remembered for his honesty, integrity, and leadership, he had a quiet sense of humor and a willingness to listen and serve as a sounding board to all. Well-known as a Colorado corporate and business leader at the frontiers of an expanding telecommunications industry, Bob was also a civic-minded contributor to the welfare of Denver, Colorado, and the Rocky Mountain region.

Bob grew up on his parent’s farm near Peckham, Colorado. After graduating from Gilcrest High School as one of a class of seven during the 1930s’ depression, Bob worked his way through the University of Northern Colorado where he earned a teaching degree on June 6, 1941. He then taught high school math, science, and history and coached the basketball team in Fort Lupton. He met his wife Elaine at college and they married on October 23, 1941. They were happily married for 63 years.

Bob began his career with the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company in 1946 after serving as Captain in the U.S. Army Signal Corps in the South Pacific during WWII. Starting as a commercial representative, he worked his way to become Chairman of the Board, following twelve years as President/CEO. He retired in 1983 as the youngest serving president of a “Baby Bell”.

During his tenure at Mountain Bell, Bob led the company to achieve milestones in providing high quality, reliable telecommunications services to an ever-growing population of residential and business users in Colorado and the mountain west region. Early in his career he spearheaded the installation of the communication system for the North American Defense Command under Cheyenne Mountain near Colorado Springs, and later helped design an historic agreement on hiring and promoting minorities and women. Bob epitomized the Mountain Bell tradition of dedication to customer service.

Bob also lent his leadership talents to numerous charitable, civic and educational organizations including: the Board of Trustees of the University of Denver, the Colorado Women’s College, and the University of Northern Colorado (where he was granted an Honorary Doctor of Laws). He was a Director of United Banks of Denver, the Air Force Academy Foundation, and Lutheran Medical Center. He also served on boards of the Denver Chamber of Commerce, the Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry (who named him Colorado Business Leader of the year in 1980), the Denver Area Boy Scout Council, Mile High United Way, the Gates Foundation, the National Parks Foundation, and the Denver Symphony. He served as national president of the Telephone Pioneers of America and President of Denver Rotary.

He was a long-time THG board member, and one of our most ardent supporters - the Robert K. Timothy Library in the THG Archives was named in his honor. Bob requested that in lieu of flowers, contributions be sent to the Telecommunications History Group.



Call Simulator for the Seattle Museum

by Sarah Autumn

Last summer, I had the opportunity to visit Phil McCarter on my way down to Eugene, Oregon, and he was kind enough to offer me a full tour of his wonderful switch-room. One of the things that had a deep impact on me was the call simulator he had running. Simply put, the call simulator was a computer program that pretended to be actual subscribers picking up and dialing their telephones. As his switches clicked and whirred, I walked through the aisles transfixed at the symphony of sounds that I was hearing. It's one thing to have an awesome collection, but it's an entirely different and spectacular thing to see and hear them in operation.

I've spent countless hours working on the panel office in the Connections Museum in Seattle, but until recently, I'd never heard what it would have sounded like with regular call traffic being processed. Sure, I could place a telephone call through it myself, but one call at a time is a far cry from the hustle and bustle of busy hour traffic. Phil's call simulator had an impact on me and I decided that we needed something similar in Seattle. While fellow volunteer Amy Wilhelm set out to catalog and sort through our trunks and wiring, I imagined what I would like a call simulator to do. After musing for a while, my impatience got the better of me, and I decided that I would write the program myself.

I had doubts about my ability to create such a simulator. On one hand, I had precisely zero experience writing a program from scratch (other than a Visual Basic email client that I wrote in high school which earned me a *B-* from my Computer Science teacher. During the rest of the class, I cheated by copying my best friend's work.) On the other hand, I understand the panel switch, and I know exactly what it needs to hum along happily.

As I waded my way through the morass of code, I got stuck frequently. Fellow volunteers Astrid, Amy, and Andrew offered invaluable assistance and helped steer me in the right direction. After a month or so, I ended up with something I was happy with and began to gather the hardware I needed to interface the computer with the panel switch.

When the time finally came to try out the simulator, I was buzzing with excitement. I put the finishing touches on the "digital" end of things, while Andrew wired up the subscriber lines to the switch. After a few adjustments, we switched the simulator on, and it worked! Calls originated from nine subscriber lines at random intervals, dialing the Panel, the No. 5 Crossbar, or the No. 1 Crossbar. After dialing completes, the line is held for a period to simulate a conversation, and then eventually hangs up. This process loops indefinitely until the program is stopped, at which time all subscriber lines are hung up and the switch is returned to normal.

Now, museum visitors can see how the panel switch would have looked and sounded when it was in service. I hope this provides a more realistic and interactive experience for all who come see this wonderful machine. Our plans are to wire subscriber lines to the crossbar offices, so we can originate calls from them as well.

For the tech-savvy, I have made the project publicly available at https://github.com/theautumn/panel_gen including the code, configuration files, and further technical details. You can find a video of me explaining the call simulator on the museum's YouTube page. Just search for "museumofcomm" to find us!



Volunteer Luncheon

The annual luncheon honoring THG volunteers in Denver was held on November 29th at the Bistro at Aspen Grove, in Littleton, CO. Volunteers are the mainstay of our organization – without them we would be unable to continue operations. Thanks, everyone!



L-R: Roy Lynn, Ron Pickens, Jerry Wild, Lisa Berquist, John Herbolich, Ron Swanson, Jim Hebbeln, Renee Lang, Jody Georgeson.



L-R: Ken Pratt, Jon Berquist, Jack Beattie, John Herbolich, Herb Hackenburg



L-R: Roy Lynn, Ron Pickens, Jerry Wild

A similar function was held at a barbeque in Seattle earlier this year.



Back row, left to right: Eric Rhinelander, Lisa Berquist, Les Anderson, Astrid Smith, Skylar Hensel, Colin Slater, Chuck Huffington, Andrew Sentman

Front row left to right: Ed Mattson, Dave Dintenfass, Amy Wilhelm, Sarah Autumn, Peter Amstein

“Another Day and Another Dollar”

By Glenn H. Barney

This essay was written by my father, the late Glenn H. Barney. He was the son of O.H. Barney who was the local Exchange Manager of Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company (MST&T) in Brush, Colorado, where my father was raised. O.H. Barney retired from MST&T in 1936.

Glenn H. Barney, who began college in Boulder at the University of Colorado in the fall of 1936, had taken a year off. He applied for and accepted a temporary job at MST&T in 1937. The story he relates is based on his experience building a new line in southwestern Colorado from Ridgway to Placerville in October of 1937. His crew members included: Kenneth Beasley, “Slim” Robertson, Lloyd Ainsworth, Art Hederman, Sam Puglease, Earl Roberts, and Jerry Kavanaugh. Their boss was Ralph B. Hargreaves. – Kem Barney

A shiver rippled across my shoulders, down my spine, and quivered out in my legs. My shirt was cold. The dark, wet blotches of sweat ringing my arm-pits and circling my waist at the belt-line no longer felt pleasingly sticky as they had in the warmth of the afternoon’s work. I paused, laid down my tools, and fastened my storm-coat in a cape across my shoulders. It felt good to shut off the raw of the glooming shadows which were advancing up the canyon side.

I was tired. I had been tired earlier perhaps, but this pause to meet the coming of evening, this ceasing of mechanical motion, permitted muscles to relax and thereby allow a surge of fatigue, a feeling of rebellion against further activity, to make itself felt. I stooped to pick up the tempered-steel digging bar. Was it magnetized and clinging to some mass of iron ore? With determination, I answered the question by swinging the bar up and dropping its point into the hole. Cursed rock, stubborn shale that kept me from completing my six-foot hole, reducing progress to a back-breaking, bit by bit struggle downward. I thought of the big thirty-five that was to fill this hole and level the telephone wires across this rock-wash to the 20-foot pole on the ridge, where even now “Slim” was almost down with his four-foot hole. Oh, to be a lineman, to climb instead of dig.

“Slim” hollered that it was only four o’clock. I knew that stock joke: day-dreams or no day-dreams it must be nearly quitting time, for the shadows had already crested the rim of the canyon on their way to the peaks. My presumption was soon verified by the high-pitched snarl of the company truck as it unwound past us on the shelf road out of sight beneath the cliffs. I began spooning rock and dirt in quick, rapid shifts of hand over hand, heave and toss. Tired? Who, me? I would have that hole down before the boss came down the line or know why not. Off came the cape – it restricted free movement. Up with the bar, down against the rock. Up, down, smash, crush. Shovel and scrape, spoon and toss. Out came the measure, unfolded, thrust down into the dark of the hole: sixty-eight, only four more inches. Rock, rock, chip and shatter. Grate and scrape, rattle of falling pebbles, up and out, heave to one side. Down, down—inches in eternity.

“Let’s go home!” came the drawn-out cry from down the right-of-way. That was the boss. Quitting time. Up with the lunch bucket and coat to one shoulder; tools placed on the other shoulder. I stumbled over the rocks and piled underbrush, past the peeled poles, white in the semi-dark, down the bank to the truck. Bucket into the side –box, tools to the racks, coat fastened snugly about my neck, then under the winch bar to a seat on a box of insulators under the cowl. I was jammed down next to “Slim”. He punched me, grinned, and said: “Well, kid, another day and another dollar.” The truck moved forward toward town—and eats.

“HELLO? YES, THIS IS SANTA”

By Don Warsavage

We've published the Santa Colonel's tale in a previous issue, but we didn't know "the rest of the story!"



Back in December 1955, the Cold War was fully engaged. Colonel Harry Shoup and his crew in Colorado Springs, Colorado were on duty at CONAD, watching for any Russian intrusions threatening the U.S. or Canada. CONAD stood for Continental Air Defense Command which later morphed into NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense Command).

The Colonel's phone rang and he answered expecting an instruction or command. Instead, he heard a tiny female voice ask, "Is this Santa Claus?"

After a pause, Colonel Shoup answered, "Yes, it is Have you been a good little girl?"

After that, calls came flooding in from kids all over Colorado Springs and Shoup instructed his staff to answer and let the kids know where Santa was on his Christmas Eve journey.

That's one version of the story. There are others. In fact, the story has become legendary, appearing in many major magazines and newspapers across the country. The theme of the story remains the same, but the details change. For example, one story says that the little girl misdialed when the call arrived at Colonel Shoup's desk. Others say that the number was a misprint in the Colorado Springs newspaper.

Now, of course, it's a wonderful tradition known as "NORAD Tracks Santa." However, its operation is quite a bit larger than a crew commander and his staff.

NORAD's website puts it this way: "NORAD Tracks Santa' has become a magical and global phenomenon delighting generations of families everywhere."

The Atlantic Magazine reported in a December 2015 article that on Christmas Eve the website "NORAD Tracks Santa" gets around 20 million contacts; on social media, they pick up about 150,000 twitter followers; and 1,200 volunteers answer about 120,000 personal calls to Santa from 200 different countries. Many of the volunteers are military personnel. However, for six years running, one of those volunteers was First Lady Michelle Obama.

Although there are other versions of the story, there's never been any question that Shoup's creative response got the whole thing rolling. In fact, he earned the nickname, "The Santa Colonel." He passed away 2009.

Before now, none of the versions of how it all began showed any major role by the phone company. However, we have a first-hand witness who tells how Mountain Bell was an unwitting, yet major, contributor to the beginnings of this wonderful program.

John Shepherd is our eyewitness to history. He retired from AT&T in 1986. Shepherd was a Marketing Representative employed by Mountain Bell in Colorado Springs in 1955. He was hired from Colorado University on an accelerated development program for high potential candidates.

Shepherd sent me a narrative of the events as he remembered them.

He recalled that back then a new device had been invented by Bell Laboratories called an answering machine. It was not a well-developed technology at the time. The only one sponsored by Bell Companies was "time of day service."

Management decided that the new machine should be tried out in Colorado Springs. The device itself was a clunky looking box full of vacuum tubes, wires, and magnetic recording equipment. No one expected an easy sale for it. But Shepherd decided to give it a go and contacted his business clients in the city. Most could see no value in such a thing except for one man at Sears who was not completely negative.

Shepherd said, "How about using it to get after-hours calls?"

The Sears rep countered, "That's no good. People can always wait till morning and call back."

Shepherd felt he was losing the sale. Then an idea came to him, so he said, "Since it's so close to Christmas, how about using it after hours and putting a message on it like, 'Ho! Ho! Ho! This is Santa Clause at Sears. Get your folks to bring you to Sears and tell me what you want for Christmas! Ho! Ho! Ho!'"

The Sears rep agreed, and the machine was installed. The number was not published since it would only be used for a short time during the holidays. Sears did list it in the local paper.

When Shepherd came to work the day after it was listed, he was rewarded with a tongue-lashing because of what had happened.

When the kids found out they could call a phone number and hear Santa, word spread throughout the city. Everybody wanted to try it. Thousands were trying to reach that one number. The Colorado Springs Central Office was overwhelmed. The call volume slowed down all phone traffic. Some calls were not getting through. The Mountain Bell Traffic Superintendent had to call in people on an emergency basis to physically disable some equipment to get the traffic flowing in a somewhat normal basis.

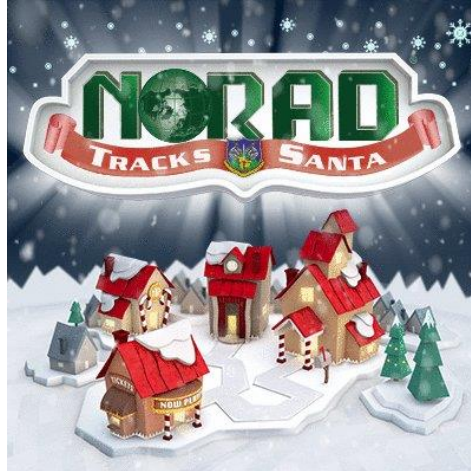
Shepherd went right over to Sears. He found the calls still coming in at a record pace. Two telephone repairmen were on the scene. They had the cover off the machine and were holding electric fans to cool it down. They were afraid it would burn out at any minute. Other machines were sent for in case this one failed. Shepherd remarked that the way the repairmen glared at him they were thinking, "so you're the genius that caused this mess."

As Shepherd stated in his notes, "The Santa Claus thing took on a life of its own. The number was passed around by word of mouth. Then, probably as a joke, a note was left on a General's desk at CONAD, asking the general to call the number."

The general complied. He called and got a busy signal. He tried again. And again. And again. After all, he was a general; it could be important. He called the operator and asked if he could find out who the number belonged to. The operator replied, "I'm sorry sir, the number is classified as non-published. We're not allowed to give out that information."

The general was not about to accept that. He called the Colorado Springs Commercial Manager of Mountain Bell, the guy who could speak for all departments and should be able help. The Commercial Manager at that time was Robert K. Timothy, future president of Mountain Bell.





Shepherd wasn't sure how the conversation went, but Mr. Timothy probably said something like, "General, I wouldn't be too concerned about not getting through to that number. You were trying, along with a lot of kids, to talk to Santa Claus."

Shepherd was a Korean combat veteran and said he was happy not to have been in the room with the general when he heard that.

Shepherd suggests when Christmas season gets near, go to the website, "noradsanta.org" and under the tab, "about NORAD," then, "Why we track Santa." There you will find NORAD's version of how it all began.

Shepherd and the erstwhile Sears rep remember it a little differently.

Denver Memories

The Denver Post has published a new hardcover coffee-table book, "Denver Memories: The Early Years." This beautiful heirloom-quality book features a glimpse of Denver from the early years to 1939 through stunning historic photos.

Illustrations include photos from readers, in addition to photos from the following organizations: Telecommunications History Group, Denver Public Library, Molly Brown House, Black American West Museum, Wings Over the Rockies Air and Space Museum, Forney Museum of Transportation, Denver Athletic Club, Denver Firefighters Museum, Colorado Railroad Museum, Colorado State Archives, Colorado Society of Hispanic Genealogy and Denver Police Museum.



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*We wish all of you in our THG family a
very happy holiday season!*



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