



TELECOMMUNICATIONS
HISTORY GROUP

CONNECTIONS *news*

www.telcomhistory.org
Autumn 2018, Vol. 23, no.3

(303) 296-1221
Jody Georgeson, editor

A Message from Our Director

As I write this, Summer is coming to a close and you can feel the change of the seasons in the air. Kids are going back to school, nights are getting cooler, leaves are starting to turn and soon our days will be filled with holiday celebrations. We have a lot to be thankful for.

We had a great celebration in July at our Seattle Connections Museum. Visitors joined us from near and far for our Open House. We are grateful to all the volunteers and Seattle Board members for their hard work and dedication in making this a successful event. Be sure to read more about the new exhibit that was dedicated in honor of our late Seattle curator, Don Ostrand, in this issue.

I would also like to thank our partners at Telephone Collectors International (TCI) and JKL Museum who traveled from California to help us celebrate.

As always, we welcome anyone who wants to visit either of our locations or to volunteer to help preserve the history of the telecommunications industry. Visit our website at www.telcomhistory.org for more information.

Enjoy the remainder of 2018.

Warm regards,

Lisa Berquist

Executive Director

Ostrand Collection Ribbon-cutting at Connections Museum Seattle!

By Dave Dintenfass

A special ribbon-cutting celebration took place on 14 July 2018 at Connections Museum Seattle. This marked the opening of a special room to display the *Ostrand Collection*. This collection, on loan from the family of our late curator Don Ostrand, contains unusual items not featured elsewhere in our museum. This includes wooden wall phones from around the world and an interior-type wooden telephone booth in exceptional condition.

Present at the ceremony were members of Don's extended family, including Don's widow Sandra West, Don's brother Bob, and Don's children Dane, Todd, and Maria and several grandchildren.

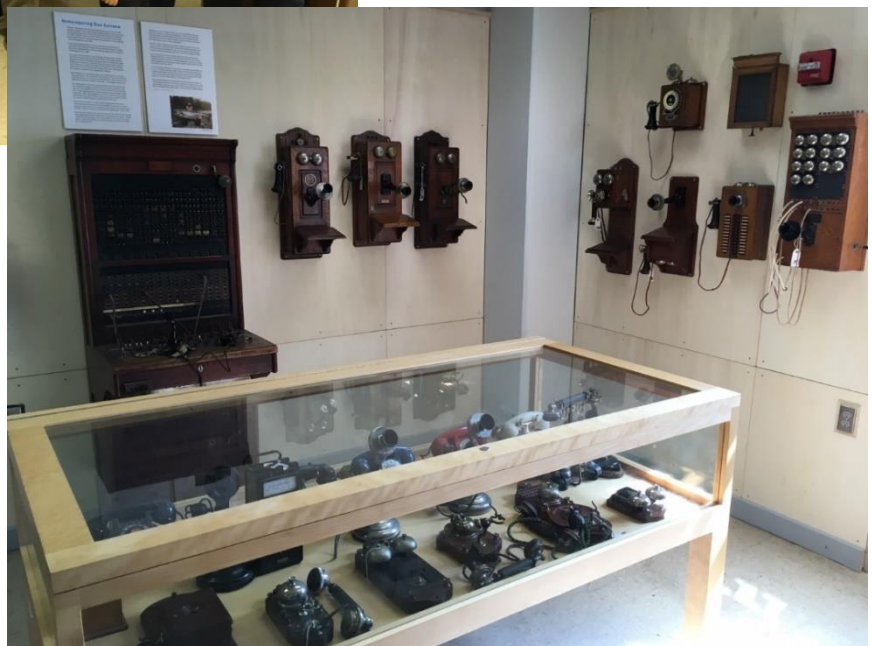
The ribbon-cutting was part of our special open house, which celebrated 30 years of continuous operation of the Seattle museum.

Also present were several THG board members, guests, and staff including THG Founder Herb Hackenburg, Mike Nearing, Lisa and Jon Berquist, Jody Georgeson, and Renee Lang.



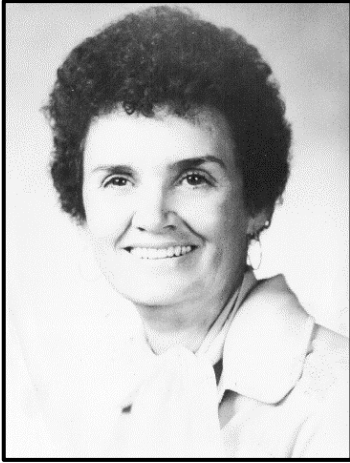
Ribbon-cutting of Ostrand Collection:
Pictured at the ribbon (cable in this case) cutting at center of photo are Todd Ostrand (left) and Dane Ostrand (right); also pictured are Don's brother Bob (extreme left) and Don's widow Sandra West (third from left)

Some of the Ostrand Collection



“She Lived Life to Its Fullest”

We recently received a donation from the family of Margaret Beaver, along with the story of this remarkable woman's life. The following describes her career at Mountain Bell.



. . . After [WWII], the young couple purchased their first home in Greeley, Colorado. Willard worked for the railroad and Margaret started her thirty year-long career with the phone company, beginning as a switchboard operator. . . . Margaret worked full time and cared for the children on her own, working graveyard and swing shifts at the phone company while Willard was stationed in Japan during the Korean War. While in Greeley, she was promoted to supervisor.

On Willard's return, the family moved to Denver where Margaret started [working] at the building downtown in 1952. Her son remembers “having the run of the building” in the 1950s, including going upstairs to view Denver with binoculars. He remembers Margaret having a room off the cafeteria where she would monitor service calls.

Margaret was given more and more responsibility, awards and promotions; she never lost her no-nonsense attitude or her strength in speaking her mind. [When she became] District Manager (about 1971) the family moved to Billings, Montana, where her job was to organize the closing of employee-operated offices as they were replaced with mechanized equipment. There were many flights on corporate jets during this period.

. . . In 1976, it was back to Denver with Human Resources. Her success as a female executive allowed [the Beavers] to travel, as a family and also with other phone company employees. In 1984, they made a group trip to Hong Kong, India and Thailand where the telephone employees, all dressed as Santa, brought Christmas cheer to local orphans. Back home in Castle Rock, Colorado she helped found a thrift store that helped homeless youth get on their feet and back home. She was also instrumental in approaching the city council to build a senior exercise wing on the community center.



When she retired from the phone company, Margaret was hired as CEO of the Pioneer Insurance Corporation, the phone company's pension fund. In this capacity, she discovered a massive malfeasance, which led to a successful multi-million dollar lawsuit on behalf of Mountain Bell employees.

Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site

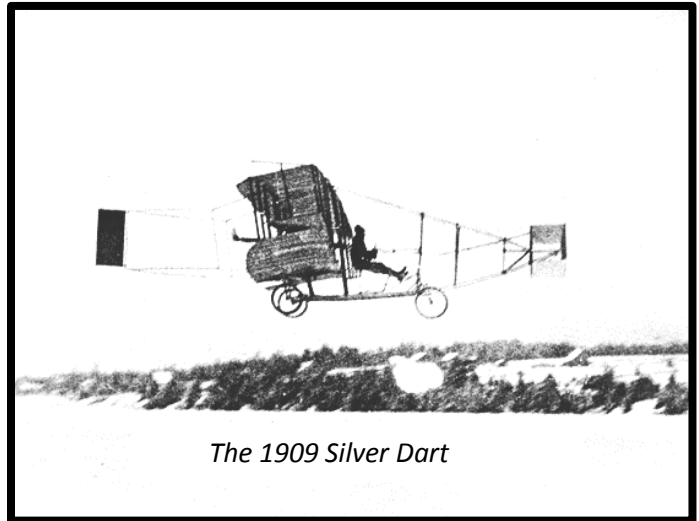


Jody, Alexander & Renee at Baddeck

While on vacation this summer, we visited Canada's Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site in Baddeck, Nova Scotia. We stayed at The Telegraph House, the same hotel at which Alexander and Mabel Bell stayed when they first came to Baddeck in 1885. Bell established a vacation home, Beinn Bhreagh, where he regularly spent a substantial part of the year. Both he and his wife played an active role in the social and intellectual life of the village.

By the time of Bell's arrival in Baddeck, the success of the telephone had freed him from the need to earn a living and, at Beinn Bhreagh, he continued his busy routine of experimentation and analysis. His imagination and wide-ranging curiosity led him into scientific experiments in such areas as medicine, aeronautics, marine engineering and space-frame construction.

Aeronautical work was a large part of his life at Beinn Bhreagh, from early kite-flying experiments to the success of the Silver Dart in February 1909. This achievement was a product of Bell's collaboration with four young men (Casey Baldwin, Douglas McCurdy, Lieutenant Thomas Selfridge and Glenn Curtiss) in the Aerial Experiment Association, founded in 1907. In later years, Bell and Baldwin turned to experiments with hydrofoil craft that culminated in the development of the HD-4, which set a world speed record in 1919.



The 1909 Silver Dart



Elsie May, Mabel, Marian, and Alexander in 1885

Bell's activities at Beinn Bhreagh had a significant impact on the economic and social life of Baddeck. The estate provided work for men and women both in traditional service occupations and in jobs connected with Bell's experiments, such as production of thousands of tetrahedral cells for his massive kites.

Mabel Bell played a vital role in her husband's career, providing him with both financial and moral support to pursue his diverse interests. Mabel inspired, founded and funded the Aerial Experiment Association which achieved heavier-than-air flight. She was responsible for the management of Beinn Bhreagh and was deeply involved in village life, helping to establish the public library, and the Home and School

Association, as well as a club for young women to promote sociability and the acquisition of general knowledge.

The major historical resources at the site are the large collection of artifacts related to Alexander Graham Bell's research, which he conducted both at Baddeck and elsewhere; books, photographs and copies of material from his personal archives; and various personal items, furniture and awards received by Bell during his lifetime.



Beinn Bhreagh is still owned and maintained by descendants of Alexander Graham and Mabel Hubbard Bell.

Courtesy Phone



A Whidbey Telecom rotary dial public telephone still provides free local calling from an alcove at the Bayview Store on Whidbey Island, Washington. The wall around the phone is decorated with historical information about Whidbey Telecom, one of the country's few remaining private, independent phone companies.

Thanks to Dave Felice for this photo and information!

PERSON TO PERSON

By Don Warsavage

*This article appeared originally in the AUSWR Retiree Guardian,
and is reprinted with permission from the author.*

Airman First Class, Roland B. Timmerman, (Red), was running flat out. He was looking for cover but could see nothing in the pitch-black Korean night. “We’d just get settled down at our base near Seoul. Then here came ‘Bed-Check Charlie’ with his planes and their bombs.”

Red was usually at his machine gun, firing tracers up into the sky trying to knock Charlie down. But this night, he just needed to get to safety. Running fast but seeing nothing, he worried that he’d fall into one of bomb craters of earlier raids. That’s when he slammed into a tree.

The medics patched him up. They sent him back to duty with a swatch of bandage across his nose.



Polish-made Il-28, used by the Korean People's Air Force

Later, a couple of officers wanted to talk to him.

Red was surprised when they offered him the Purple Heart. He told them, “Hey, we were being bombed! I’m supposed to tell my grandkids, ‘I got the Purple Heart for running into a tree?’”

He turned them down. No Purple Heart.

Tom Brokaw’s Greatest Generation was made up of men like Red.

Before he went to Korea, Red was a Lineman working for Northwestern Bell. He was a member of what was known as an “unlocated crew.” They weren’t homeless, but they could be in any motel from one week to the next anywhere in Iowa, Nebraska or South Dakota. They went wherever they were needed. Newer employees were often members of these crews. Some thought that if you stood up well to the rigors of unlocated crews, you were a candidate for a more stable job.

When I talked to Red he told me he had recently suffered a mild stroke but had recovered very well. Red treated hardships with a more determined commitment balanced with an edge of humor, typical of a kid raised The Great Depression. He told me stories of his life over the phone from the comfort of his living room. On occasion I could hear one his two great grandchildren loudly competing for his attention.

He told me of a time back on the unlocated crew when he came to a telephone pole called a “Black Diamond.” They were really hard wood. His gaffs would barely break the surface. And he fell off. He landed flat on his back in a snowdrift. Panic receded, and anger rushed in. He attacked the pole, driving his gaffs in with furious strength. Consequently, when he started back down he couldn’t dislodge them.

He told of another time when everything started out just right. The sun was shining. He felt great and he was approaching the first pole of the morning at a railroad crossing. He climbed up, and belted in. The Engineer from an approaching train happily waved his arm out the cab window up at Red. Red waved back. When the train passed underneath, the Engineer gave a blast that covered him in black, gritty smoke.

You could hear the smile in Red’s voice as he told these stories.

Nebraska and South Dakota were among the states that experienced a brutal winter of historic proportions in 1950-51. One official report stated, "The snow clung to everything. Cattle were blinded and suffocated. School children lost their way and some died of hypothermia. Snow piled in such great heights and froze so hard that people could walk along the tops of REA power poles." It was the same near Springfield, Nebraska where Red and his unlocated crew were working. They didn't climb a pole. They just walked along on the snow, hoping they wouldn't break through, repairing the line as they went.



Back from Korea, Red returned to Northwestern Bell and became a Combinationman, the jack-of-all-trades job of outside plant. In 1955, he and his crew were given the urgent task of saving the telephone service for the town of Valley, Nebraska.

Valley is a little town that sits right between the Platte and Elkhorn Rivers in their flow to the Missouri. These rivers have a dramatic history of damaging floods. The 1955 flood could take out the Valley central office which contained the step switches connecting all the phones in town.

Red's crew consisted of six combinationmen led by their foreman, John Hodges. They had spent the last couple days digging and filling sandbags. The flood's crest was predicted for that night.

John Hodges loaded Red and the rest of the crew into a van and rushed to the central office to finish their work. Hodges slammed on the brakes when he was not able to see the familiar bridge's superstructure. The van skidded to stop just a few feet shy of the end of the broken highway. They got out of the van and looked at the flooding river where a bridge used to be.

They found another way to the central office and immediately got to work. They finished stacking sandbags against the advancing water and set up pumps and hoses to hopefully disperse the flow that washed through their makeshift barricade.

Exhausted, they went inside the central office. The noisy step switches were clattering away connecting Valley residents to their families and friends. Red dozed off. He woke abruptly and asked his mate, Bob Corby, "Are we okay?"

Corby checked outside and yelled back, "Yeah, we're good."

The water nearly reached the top of their sandbags but didn't overflow. The pumps handled the seepage and the Valley central office survived the flood.



Later in his career, Red was given a critical job designed to solve a serious problem. He was to liaison with the cable manufacturer, Western Electric Company. It was his job to be sure the right kind of cable got to the right job site in Iowa, South Dakota and Nebraska. This had not been happening in a time of expansion and exploding customer demand for telephone service.

Red pulled it off and he retired from that job in 1986 with 36 years' service.

He married his wife, Joyce in 1954. As we talked on the phone, I could occasionally hear Joyce gently coaching Red in the background as he sorted through his many rich memories. They have three children - two girls and a boy - who gave them five grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Red did his job as he lived his life - with integrity, a sense of humor and of course, Person-to-Person.

What Happened . . .

100 years ago?

September 1, 1878 - Emma M. Nutt was hired as the first woman telephone operator (a few hours ahead of her sister, Stella) at the Telephone Dispatch Company in Boston. Both had previously been employed as telegraph operators.

75 years ago?

August 21-22, 1943 – The first No. 4 toll crossbar switching system in the world was cut into service at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This was the first concrete move toward toll dialing.

50 years ago?

1968 brought the first national strike against the Bell System since 1947. Some 200,000 telephone workers walked out because AT&T refused to agree to wage increases that would meet the rise in the cost of living. The strike lasted 18 days with AT&T ultimately agreeing to a raise in wages and benefits that totaled nearly 20 percent over a three-year period. AT&T also agreed to pay the full premium for the health care plan. Prior to these negotiations, workers had to pay three-fourths of the total premium.

25 years ago?

In 1993 the first GSM cellular network was launched in Finland. These differed from the previous generation by using digital instead of analog transmission, and fast out-of-band phone-to-network signaling. The rise in mobile phone usage, because of 2G, was explosive.



We give thanks for our members and sponsors, to our staff and our board members, and to our amazing volunteers! May you all have a scary Halloween and wonderful Holidays.



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