



TELECOMMUNICATIONS
HISTORY GROUP

CONNECTIONS *news*

www.telcomhistory.org
Winter, Vol. 23, no.4

(303) 296-1221
Jody Georgeson, editor

A Message from Our Director

The end of the year is a good time for reflection on how blessed we are at the Telecommunications History Group. We are grateful for the dedicated volunteers that serve in our museums and archives as well as our generous members, donors and supporters. As you will read in this edition, we say goodbye to a long-time volunteer in Seattle, Dale Thompson. He will truly be missed; and we wish him well on his next adventure. We also say goodbye to the Colorado/Wyoming Association of U S West Retirees. Their support over the years has been invaluable. Thanks to all that contributed to the organization.

There are also good things happening at THG. We have put the finishing touches on our new website and I invite you to check it out at www.telcomhistory.org. Here you will find information about our THG Archives, Connections Museum Seattle, Connections Museum Denver as well as many resources and online exhibits. There is something for everyone.

I hope you will take time to stop by our museums and see some of the interesting things that are always being added. Connections Museum Denver has added a working step switch display to their exhibit and Seattle continues to make improvements to their unique exhibits. If you need something to do during the winter months, please contact us for volunteer opportunities.

We wish you all a joyous Holiday Season and a Happy 2019.

Warm regards,

Lisa Berquist

Executive Director

Honoring Volunteer Dale Thompson

By Dave Dintenfass



Here at Connections Museum Seattle, we just celebrated our 30th anniversary. Dale Thompson is one of several volunteers who have been here almost that long. Dale's been a "regular" here since 1994 and has helped with many projects along the way. Dale and his wife Diane have moved to a retirement community that's just a bit too far from Seattle for regular commuting. Regretfully, we say goodbye to Dale after 24 years at the museum.

Over the years, Dale's numerous contributions included skillful restoration of radio equipment, outside-plant displays, and several extensive rewiring projects. More recently, Dale was an integral part of 30-year overhaul, a massive effort to declutter both the museum and our storage facility.

As incredible as it may seem, Dale's volunteer activities were not restricted to Connections Museum Seattle. Dale's other associations include:

- 25-plus years with the University Lions Club.
- 19 years on the restoration crew of the Iron Goat Trail in the nearby Cascade Mountains.
- 24 years volunteering on the restoration of the B-29 (*T-Square 54*) at the Museum of Flight. Dale started with the radio equipment and then the gun turrets of B-29 (the only functioning B-29 turrets in the world) and then progressed to B-29 Crew Chief from 2013 to 2018 (for more info and a virtual tour, go to <http://www.museumofflight.org/aircraft/boeing-b-29-superfortress>).



Dale started his career with Pacific Northwest Bell in 1966 in Outside Plant Engineering, was promoted to second-level supervisor in 1969, and retired from "the company" in 1994 after many years as Engineering Manager in Special Services and other assignments. Dale holds a degree from University of Washington. Various aspects of Dale's telephone career included designing aerial, buried, subway and submarine cable additions, Special Services engineering, and cost-study analysis.

Dale relates two memorable incidents from his career. The first was a cumulative total of more than 24 hours in the witness chair being cross-examined by ten attorneys during a rate hearing in the 1970s. The context was justification for tariff-adjustments for Special Services before the Washington State Utilities Commission. Dale chaired a committee with various department members to rewrite the outdated, hard-to-understand Special Services Tariffs which are for non-switched private lines. These tariffs hadn't been updated for decades and needed to be made compliant with state law to ensure that actual customer cost was not inadvertently subsidized.

The second incident was the day Dale learned to climb a telephone pole. At the time, Dale worked in an office building in Renton (southeast of Seattle) and was cross-training someone from the Plant Department who had extensive experience climbing poles. Advised to bring old clothes, Dale prepared for a pole-climbing lesson. On the appointed day, Dale and his "trainer" found a suitable pole along a

nearby railroad track. Dale dug in with his borrowed climbing hooks and got up and down the pole without incident -- until later that afternoon when the District Engineer informed Dale that the building nearly fell over when everybody rushed to the windows to see him climb, and also to remind him that he wasn't covered by insurance and if he was ever going to climb a pole again, NOT to choose a pole near the office! All the time the District Engineer had a smirk on his face!

If you are interested in volunteering with the Telecommunications History Group, contact Lisa Berquist at info@telcomhistory.org or 303-296-1221.

Communication During Wartime



Communication has always been an important component of warfare. In the Connections Museum Denver, we've mounted a new exhibit honoring our troops involved in communication during conflicts from the Revolution through the present. Methods employed during our nation's war for independence (messengers, signal lights, and voice commands) differed little from those used by ancient armies.

The first electronic communication used during battle was via a telegraph line strung between headquarters and an observation balloon, so generals could monitor the battle and direct troop movement. By the first world war, telegraph and telephone were integral parts of a sophisticated communications system.

The Persian Gulf War demonstrated that military communications had expanded and transformed into information technology. As information systems achieved equal footing with military hardware in the conduct of war, all the U S military branches incorporated numerous commercially-produced systems. The Army Signal Corps' network, connected with those of the other branches and with the Allied Coalition Forces, spanned the geographic area with commercially-developed cellular telephone and a single-channel ground-and-airborne radio system.

According to General Colin Powell, "Satellites were the single most important factor that enabled us to build the command, control, and communication network for Desert Shield"

Information technology will continue to transform military communications. Because the value of information increases exponentially through dissemination, its potential is virtually limitless.



Come view the new exhibit, tour the historic Mountain States Telephone Headquarters building, and visit the Connections Museum in Denver. To arrange a tour, contact us at info@telcomhistory.org, or 303-296-1221

North American Numbering Plan

A recent email from the Snopes people asked if Indianapolis' 317 area code was in commemoration of the 317 survivors of the USS Indianapolis' sinking in 1945. (Yes, they really do research these things!) It got me thinking about our telephone numbering system.

The Bell System, in the interest of unifying the many numbering plans that existed in the U S, developed the "North American Numbering Plan," which was implemented in October 1947 and throughout the 1950s. AT&T engineers assigned codes that would be identifiable to the then somewhat unsophisticated computers. Each area code had either a "0" or "1" as the center digit. States with only one area code would have "0," while those with multiple would have "1," enabling the computers to distinguish between local and long-distance calls. Additionally, densely populated areas got the most efficiently dialed codes (New York's 212 vs. Anchorage's 907) Codes resembling one another were separated to avoid confusion (Oregon's 503 vs. Florida's 305). It is doubtful that there was thought given to commemorating any specific event or person.

The Plan now includes 24 countries and territories, including the United States and its territories, Canada, Bermuda, Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, Sint Maarten, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and Turks & Caicos. It is administered by the North American Numbering Plan Administration (NANPA).

The most notable North American country that doesn't use the Plan is Mexico. Mexican participation was planned, but implementation stopped after three area codes (706, 903 and 905) had been assigned, and Mexico opted for an international numbering format, using country code 52. The area codes in use were subsequently withdrawn in 1991.

Some common special numbers in the North American system:

- 0 – Operator assistance
- 00 – Long-distance operator assistance
- 011 – International access code using direct dial (for all destinations outside the NANP).
- 01 – International access code using operator assistance (for all destinations outside the NANP).
- 101-xxxx – Used to select use of an alternative long-distance carrier
- 211 – Local community information or social services (in some cities)
- 311 – City government or non-emergency police matters
- 411 – Local telephone directory service (Some telephone companies provide national directory assistance)
- 511 – Traffic, road, and tourist information
- 611 – Telephone line repair service, wireless operator customer service
- 711 – Relay service for customers with hearing or speech disabilities.
- 811 – *Dig safe* pipe/cable location in the United States, non-urgent telehealth/tele-triage services in Canada
- 911 – Emergency telephone number – fire department, medical emergency, police

AUSWR Colorado/Wyoming Disbanding

After 23 years of advocating for retiree rights, the Colorado/Wyoming Association of U S West Retirees will cease to exist on December 31, 2018. Their last annual meeting was held on Saturday, October 20, in Lakewood, Colorado. They have been a good friend to THG, and many of our members also belong to that organization.

Through the years AUSWR has helped us keep informed about healthcare, pension and other retiree issues, and has acted as liaison with the corporation and with the National Retiree Legislative Network.

The NWB Association will continue to operate and has invited all Colorado/Wyoming retirees to join them. For more information, contact them at gwestretirees@jankordcpa.com or on 763-432-28860.

What Happened in History?

1883 – Telephone service was established across the Mexican border between Brownsville, Texas and Nuevo Laredo, Matamoros, and Paso del Norte.

1918 – On July 24, President Woodrow Wilson issued a proclamation assuming control of the telephone and telegraph systems in the United States, placing them under the direction of the Post Office Department. (Control was returned to the private ownership and control of AT&T on July 30, 1919.)

1943 – The first No. 4 toll crossbar switching system in the world went into service at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This was the first step toward toll dialing.

1968 – The longest single labor strike in the history of the Bell System lasted from April 15 to September 21.

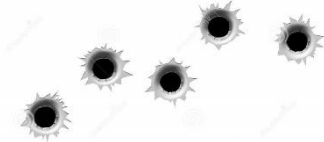
- The Carterfone decision was reached by the FCC, striking down existing interstate telephone tariffs which prohibited the attachment or connection to the public telephone system of any equipment or device that was not supplied by the telephone companies. (The Carterfone is a device invented by Thomas Carter that manually connects a two-way radio system to the telephone system, allowing someone on the radio to talk to someone on the phone.)

1993 – Vice President Al Gore, in a speech outlining the Clinton administration's position on fostering an "information super highway, called for eliminating the legal barriers that prevent cable television, local telephone, and long distance services from competing with one another.

Telephones in the Wild West

By Don Warsavage

Eldon Schmitt started his career with Mountain Bell in 1955, as a Lineman in Powell, Wyoming. He was also a combinationman and held several management jobs. He took the job of Exchange Manager at Riverton, Wyoming in 1964. Eldon retired in March of 1987 with 32 years of service. He said, "The job of Exchange Manager was one of the best jobs I've ever had."



She'd called him on Sunday and told him he'd better come see for himself. She cleaned the telephone company business office on the weekends in Riverton, Wyoming. So Eldon Schmitt, Telephone Exchange Manager, went down to have a look.

Standing out front, he couldn't believe what he was seeing. There were about half dozen bullet holes in the window of the telephone business office.

Maybe he shouldn't have been so surprised. Riverton has a rich history of the Old West. It was the site of the famous Fur Trade Rendezvous of the early 1800s, featuring the likes of mountain men, Jim Bridger and Jedediah Smith, fur traders, Shoshones and Arapahos. Small groups of gold prospectors fought off Indian raids along the Sweetwater River just south of Riverton. The very land that Riverton stands on was ceded to them by Wind River Indian Reservation.

But this was the 1960s---not the 1860s.

However, after World War II, the U. S. Government began offering large contracts for processed uranium called "yellow cake." Uranium was discovered in the Gas Hills east of Riverton and the boom was on, exploding across Wyoming. And like the gold rush days of old, all kinds of people began showing up.

During the week following the discovery of the bullet holes, the service reps and Eldon were uneasy as they watched the walls being patched, the window being replaced and the shattered debris on the floor being swept up.

They also thought they had a pretty good idea who had done it.

The new customer had been trouble from the first day he walked into the business office. He was about Eldon's size, around six feet and two hundred pounds. He was a large shareowner of a company that won a fat contract to dig uranium out of the Gas Hills. He demanded that his service be installed immediately.

A recent altercation that Eldon had with this guy had resulted in Eldon getting chewed out by the District Commercial Manager in Cheyenne. He'd told Eldon, "You can't talk to customers that way."

Eldon had replied, "I'll do whatever I need to if my home or family is in jeopardy." Then Eldon related his side of what had happened with this now-infamous customer.

The customer, after getting telephone service installed at his home in Riverton, refused to dial his own long-distance calls. He didn't care if long distance dialing was now available to Wyoming

customers. It was the operator's job to dial his calls and he wasn't going to let the telephone company "pawn it off on him."

Each time he tried to call long distance, the operator told him, as she was instructed to do, that he could dial the call himself. That would set him off. He would verbally abuse the operator using language laced with cursing. The operator would complete his call for him but then, often in retaliation, leave his line plugged up, disabling his phone from any further calls. Of course, that just made him angrier. His complaints became well known to the phone company upper management people in Cheyenne.

One night, Eldon was in bed when the phone rang. It was this man who, unable to use his phone after one of these episodes, had gone to a pay phone to complain. His raging at Eldon and the Phone Company was characterized by his usual stream of unprintable adjectives. When Eldon finally got a chance to talk, he agreed to look into the matter. He then called the man's home phone, which was answered by the man's wife. Clearly the operator had unplugged her cord and the phone was back in service. He resolved to talk to the Traffic Manager in Casper in the morning. Casper was where all the telephone operators were that served this part of Wyoming were located.

Eldon returned to bed. At about midnight there was a skidding of tires as headlights flashed across the windows. This was followed by a loud banging on Eldon's front door. When Eldon opened the door, there was his "favorite customer." He was belligerent, yelling and swearing. He pushed Eldon and tried to enter the home.

Eldon responded with some choice words of his own and that's when the man found himself flat on his back on Eldon's front lawn. Eldon informed him that if he'd like to take this up again, he'd be in his office the next day.

In the morning, Eldon talked with the Riverton Chief of Police. He found that the Chief was well aware of this man and, by the way, he was also known for carrying a gun. After Eldon reported his office being shot up to the Police Chief, the officers came out, carefully looked things over, took notes and left. Eldon never heard any more about it.

The customer left Riverton and moved back to California.

Thanks to their efforts, neither Eldon nor his staff had to ever buckle on a six-shooter to come to work; otherwise this story may have been included as one of the many heroic tales of "How the West Was Won."



The Retiree Guardian and *Connection News* thank Eldon and Don for this remarkable story.

Telephones and the Gold Rush

The telephone had been introduced in California in 1876 by Samuel Hubbard, brother of Bell company founder, Gardiner Greene Hubbard. California received the telephone enthusiastically, and on February 17, 1878, San Francisco became the third city in the world to open an exchange.

By Spring, 1878, the Gold & Stock Company, a subsidiary of Western Union, actively competed with the Bell company for business in California. This company used Thomas A. Edison transmitters and Elisha Grey receivers.

Gold mining by this time was an established industry with money to spend. Telephones were used extensively in mines, and there is evidence of many toll lines connecting mining towns. These lines were usually built by mining companies for business purposes, but lines were frequently also available to the public. The earliest known toll line was opened in California between the mining towns of York and Liberty Hill.

By June 1878, the Amador Telephone Company operated a toll line in California between Jackson, Sutter Creek, and the Oneida Mine over a distance of 25 miles. By December, the ridge telephone line, a toll line connecting French Corral to Milton, was completed by the Bell Company. The line stretched over 60 miles.



In October 1879, Horace Tabor, who owned silver mines in Colorado and who had been using telephones in his mines, opened the Leadville Telephone Company, which was subsequently sold to the Colorado Telephone Company (a Bell company).

After buying the Leadville company in 1888, Colorado Telephone decided to connect Colorado's two largest cities, Leadville and Denver. It was no small venture. The connecting telephone toll line had to go over the 13,180-foot Mosquito Pass. A telephone line had never been built

at this altitude, and the first three attempts were failures. The lightweight poles, which were the only poles mules and horses could carry up the mountain, just couldn't hold up under the wind, ice, snow and rockslides that occur constantly at that altitude. The toll line was finally "installed" by laying insulated wire on the ground.

Our archives collection contains many wonderful publications and periodicals. Among our favorites are a series of Pioneer newsletters featuring original drawing by Edgar Church.



*May your holidays be filled with love, laughter and joy
and may you have a very happy 2019!*



**TELECOMMUNICATIONS
HISTORY GROUP**

