

Paul Tyler
January 30, 1989

Mark Greenberg
Interviewer

MG This is January 30, 1989. I'm speaking with Mr. Paul Tyler at his home in Barre, Vermont for the Green Mountain Chronicles Series, Vermont Historical Society. And we're going to talk about telephones. So let's start with what you started to tell me.

PT Well you said this was sponsored by the New England Telephone.

MG It is indeed.

PT But as I mentioned, there were several independent companies. In fact there was the Orange County.

MG Just a second...

MG Okay, so let's start again, about independent phone companies.

PT Well when we first met, I was mentioning with, to Mr. Greenberg about the different telephone companies and he said, "This was in a portion sponsored by New England Telephone," which is really know now as, it's a portion of Ninex, with the merger with the New York Telephone Company. That there were several, all kinds of independent companies. In fact in Chelsea there were two companies. One being the Orange County Telephone Company. I believe there was one in Plainfield and Northfield. That still remains but it's merged with a conglomerate. About the only independent company in this area would be the Waitsfield-Fayston Telephone Company and one of the founders I believe was Elton Farr. I remember he and his wife quite well. And I believe it's the daughter that married Mr. Haskins that now has it.

MG Was this common in other states for there to be so many small phone companies?

PT Oh there were hundreds in the State of Maine. In fact I think a few still remain. One of the last companies in Maine was the Bryant Telephone Company and they just went electronic within the last five years. They still had crank phones.

MG Now I remember reading about that. So throughout Vermont there were these independent companies not just in Central Vermont. Were there...

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PT No, scattered throughout the state. And they're still other companies like in Springfield. Hammond, whether he has sold out now or not, but he was still running a independent company in the Wallingford or Clarendon area.

MG How did this develop? How was it that I guess we usually think of AT & T as having been the, the phone company. So how was the territory divided up? Do you know any, do you know any of the original history of the phone companies?

PT Well of course, one of the first exchanges to start I believe was in New Haven, Connecticut perhaps. And there wasn't capital, but the farmers, which Vermont at that time was quite a farming state. I would say that perhaps 80% maybe, does that sound feasible?

MG Yea.

PT Were farmers and they had heard about these telephones, so they would cut a few poles or string a wire on trees and I think some of those lines had about 40 people on it. They tell in Chelsea about a, a number of switches where that they were on the line, but if somebody went upon like West Hill, wanted to get down into the Village, there would be a switch in the person's house and they would crank their number which would give so many rings and someone would answer the phone at the switch, or switch house where the switch was housed and they would throw like a lever that would connect the line on West Hill for example to further down the line. And I think there were several switches. But back in the year of 1946, that was the year of my employment, there was still, of course they'd long done away with the switches and Chelsea had been taken over. The Orange County Telephone Company had been taken over by New England. But when I first came to work there were eight party lines that had sometimes as many as fifteen people on it. Like when you spoke with me, I said well I didn't know too much about the early days like in '13, only from what was handed down. And the '20's which you were primarily interested in, I could remember the '40's where in this area which comprised of the Wire Chief's area, I believe was 12 exchanges being Chelsea, Washington, East Calais, Plainfield, Williamstown, Brookfield, Barre, Montpelier, Waterbury, Stowe, Morrisville and Johnson that Barre and Montpelier didn't get dial service until 1955, in the fall of 1955. They were still operator, pick up the receiver, the operator would ask for the number they wanted and she would connect it through a manual cord board that was located, what they used to call Quarry Bank which is now Merchants Bank on the third floor. The first dial system that went in

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effect in this area was in Williamstown and I believe in 1938. The next town to get dial phones was Washington and I believe that was in the year of 1948.

MG Isn't it a little strange that these smaller towns would have gotten dial service before the State Capitol, Montpelier or Barre which was a thriving commercial city?

PT Well it may have been that the equipment in these what they used to call exchanges was outdated and needed, the switchboard itself needed to be replaced or the what they used to call an agent, it was really the operator, but she was an agent, maybe Ruth told you. Ruth McKenzie told you more about the operators, but they used to hire ones because they couldn't tend the thing 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. So they would hire assistants to come in and it could be that they couldn't get anyone. They were usually in a person's house. And I assume they signed a contract or something I don't know. They were, they called them agents. It could be that the agent wanted to retire or didn't want the telephone system in our house. I know not what did take place. But Woodstock, they always looked well after Woodstock because there were a lot of monied people in Woodstock. And they were one of the first ones to get dial phones. I believe they may, I may stand corrected, but Woodstock was one of the early areas that had dial phones. In fact Burlington didn't go until about the same, I think it may have been a couple of years before Barre and Montpelier did. They had the same, lift up the receiver and although the rest of the exchanges in 1946, other than that I mentioned, Williamstown, Barre and Montpelier had the operator assist, pick up the number, pick up the receiver and give the number. The rest were all crank phones and they remained so until 19, I believe it was 1960. The Northeast Kingdom was the last area in the State of Vermont to get dial phones. They were all crank up there, with the exception I believe of Newport. St. Johnsbury had gone dial prior to that, but I'm speaking of the Northeast Kingdom, Newport, Derby, Orleans, Barton, Troy, North Troy, Island Pond and so on and so forth. All of what George Aiken termed as the Northeast Kingdom.

MG Do you know when telephones at all came, first came into Vermont? Do you have an idea?

PT I would say, I should know, but I would say at the turn of century there were, there were phones.

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MG When you were speaking before of farmers stringing lines through the trees or cutting poles, when was, when were you referring to?

PT Oh that was in the early 1900's. In fact, they used a, they only had one wire and they used a ground return which really wasn't too conducive to a good clear line that we know now.

MG So they would hook into a system that was already existing is that it?

PT No they made their own system.

MG I see.

PT In other words, there really wasn't much of a switchboard when they first started. All it was was almost like a continual line with these switches where they would throw the switch to connect onto the other people which may not have been more than 50, 50 people that had telephones.

MG I see. So that was the origin of the small local phone companies?

PT That's right.

MG Okay. And they wouldn't be able to speak to anyone outside of their own loop, among themselves?

PT Later on, it involved getting trunk lines in from the outside like Montpelier or Barre and what not.

MG Now I understand. Let's back up a little and find out a little bit about you. Are you a native of Barre?

PT No, not really.

MG To where?

PT I'm a Vermonter. I was born in Burlington, Vermont, June 1, 1923 and I was educated in the elementary school, in a one room schoolhouse known as Flanagan School. Same teacher for the same eight years. And I don't know whether I was, we were a disappointment to her or not, but she only taught the eight years and went into business, you know.

MG This was a one room schoolhouse _____?

PT This is a one room schoolhouse.

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MG The reason I'm asking is another one of these programs will deal with the one room schoolhouse and its passing. So whenever we come across someone who went to one, we're very interested in hearing anything that he or she might recall about those days. So we'll touch upon that too. We can digress now or we can come back to it later.

PT Well in passing, I would say that Mary Welch was the teacher. She was just out of UVM. She did a tremendous job. In fact, I don't think it was really too bad to go into a one room school because you could pick up knowledge from the later grades, Grades 1 - 8. And of course some of the, some of the grades weren't even, even there. There wasn't enough kids. It was a small district school.

MG This was in, in Burlington?

PT No, no, in Moretown, out in the Valley.

MG Oh I see. I thought you had said this was in Burlington?

PT No, I was born in Burlington. That was the only reason being, there was a hospital there. (LAUGH)

MG Uh huh. But you lived in Moretown?

PT Lived in Moretown, right.

MG Okay. That's where the one room schoolhouse was?

PT That is correct.

MG Okay. Did you, you had nothing to compare it to probably since it was the first place you went to school I would imagine?

PT Well, there was the village school that had, you know, that was a multi, multi-room school.

MG How did you feel, do you remember what it was like going to a one room schoolhouse?

PT Well I thought that the Village School was real big building and then you go from a one room school and I went to Waterbury High School, it was massive. It was like a, almost like a college campus. (LAUGH) But anyway, that's enough about that.

MG Okay. (LAUGH) In Moretown, as growing up as a child, did your family have a telephone, was there phone service?

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PT Ah, there was phone service, but we did not have a telephone. It was, it really wasn't a necessity then. There were some neighbors on both sides that had telephones, so if you really needed a telephone, the neighbors would come over with a message or, but you used the U.S. mail in those days. I remember, of course, they were party lines and I remember that some people used to monopolize and they would take down the receiver, well that was a good way of getting the news. And sometimes if somebody was on there very long, they were the old wall phones. I have a picture in that, there are some pictures of them in that book there. They would take the receiver, which was a separate unit and put it against the mouthpiece and it used to make quite a noise and they couldn't really have a clear conversation. So, they might not like it, but if one held the receiver to the, close to the transmitter, they would finally get off the line.
(LAUGH)

MG Do you think there was a lot of listening in on other people's conversations?

PT I believe so, I believe so. Of course, I don't, there may be four party lines today, but they're a, they're a scarce, they're a scarce items, scarce item. For the most part, it's a one party and a two party wherein if it's a two party line you don't hear the other, other person's ring, so you'd have no way of knowing that the line was busy. And eight party lines went out the window I think, I think in the State of Vermont about 1972.

MG When did your family first get a telephone?

PT Oh, I think after the, I think after the war.

MG After the second world war?

PT Yea, yea.

MG Oh, so that's, that's really pretty late?

PT That's right.

MG And they didn't feel the need because the neighbors could give them messages and they could write letters and use the mail?

PT That's right, that's right.

MG And that didn't bother the neighbors that they had to pay for the phone, phone and yet and run messages?

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PT Well no, well, it wasn't, wasn't very often, only in emergency.

MG Uh huh. You went to work for the phone company in 1940?

PT '06.

MG '46.

PT July, May 27, 1946.

MG Which company did you go to work for and what did you do?

PT I went in the construction department, you know setting poles and running cable and running what we call open wire that's on cross arms with, with glass insulators. That was, that was primarily the work because there were a lot of the areas, there were no telephone lines in and that's when it started taking off, the you know, the rural areas farming areas or the out country or whatever.

MG 1946 I believe was the same year that rural electrification came into Vermont. Was there any connection between, that the fact that this was apparently a growth time for telephone service also?

PT Well at that time, there used to be joint lines and for some reason I know not what, that the electric light people would use the top portion of the pole as they had for years and the telephone company would use the lower space. But for some reason they did not go joint, what we call joint, a joint pole. In other words, sometimes, well right out here there's three down on the hill here. There's the light company, and the Green Mountain Power and the Simmonds Cable TV and the telephone company. But for some reason they didn't go joint right away. But in later years they did.

MG You mean at first they set up separate poles _____?

PT That's, that's right. I don't know why. I don't know whether it was something to do with the government or, or what the deal was.

MG So there was no tie in that you know of between electricity coming and the telephone going into these outlying regions? Was electricity necessary for the operation of the telephones?

PT No, no, no they were separate, separate line.

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MG So a phone could go into a house that didn't have any electricity?

PT That's right because they were either powered. They do take batteries, in fact the phones here now are run on about a 48 volt DC system where the batteries are supplied in the, well there, for instance here in Barre, they're at Elm Street. But in the old crank phones, the source of the battery for hearing was right in a, in a box. I can throw you the box. In fact, there is one there that you open the, open the door and there was the three batteries on the inside, a special, a special place for them. And of course the ringing came from what they call a central office where the operators were. As they had large DC storage batteries there.

MG Do you remember any special stories or incidents in bringing phone service out to the more rural parts of Vermont?

PT Well, not really. I think probably some of the storms and what not. Of course you hear a lot of stories like back in the '20's the, where they stored the, well a few trucks and I think they still had horses here that some of the telephone company men that worked out on the lines, I don't know whether it was because of the weather, they were out in the weather, but they used to like to take a drink. In fact, they had a small still (LAUGH). This was in during prohibition I believe I don't know. But I read the story that there was some inspectors coming up from the Boston area, the Home Office and they worked all one day dismantling this still and took it up to one of the other fellows rural hunting camp. (LAUGH)

MG Did you use horses going overland in the back country?

PT We did to pull the, in fact we used to, they used horses, in fact they still use horses in the rural areas to pull the cables, cable through. But that was quite, quite often we ran lines between St. Johnsbury and it's what they call the, well Gold Plate Line. It was Portland to Montreal circuits what was known as 12 Section 320 in the State of Vermont and that was, most of it was, a lot of it in fact was off the main road. So we would have what they call the full running board of wire which was sometimes, that would be a cross arm, some, would be ten wires, five on either side of the pole and you really needed a horse to pull the wires. Of course we wouldn't pull all ten at once but, because they'd get tangled up. Usually it was, was two wires at a time and was quite a pull up some of those hills in, hills and dales.

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MG Was there ever any problem with landowners who didn't want you crossing their land or didn't want telephone wires being strung up?

PT Well, occasionally that would happen. I remember the old foreman over there in St. Johnsbury. He got in quite an argument with one of the landowners because the landowner said he was going to chop down the pole and he said, "You hadn't better." He said, "I'll get the Sheriff here in about five minutes." But most of that was, especially where the toll circuits were was a deeded right of way. And most of the people wanted a telephone so I don't think they had much of a problem running a line through because they were anxious for the telephone to get in. But occasionally, they always had a right of way man. In fact they still have one or two in the State of Vermont. If someone wants to put like a, they need a brace or an anchor if it's on a corner to put a guide wire, we call them guide wires (TELEPHONE RINGING), it hooks on the pole and an anchor might not be feasible to put it right beside the pole because of the strain or area that they might run it quite a length of it and put it over in a more secluded spot. In other words, instead of putting the anchor right in the lawn, they might take a longer piece and then run it to an auxiliary pole over in a less desirable area.

MG I was just wondering whether people were back then concerned as many are today about what all this stringing of wires is doing to the landscape, to the look of Vermont. You started out at the beginning of the 20th century with dirt roads and no wires and as the century progressed, the roads became paved and more and more wires started criss-crossing in the skies?

PT Well, I don't know whether it still is or not, but did you ever go on the Plainfield Road where the Hutchinson's Garden used to be. I believe it's Trout Lily. At that time it was the Great Wood Farms and they did not want aerial wire. So for a long time, all of the cable, there was a buried cable in there all the way through past the Goddard turn. But occasionally people will not want aerial wire and they do, they do bury it. In fact a lot of it is buried now. The new coaxial cable you know, just the fiberoptic rather. That is all buried between I know Montpelier and Burlington and I assume it is south of Montpelier to White River, but I know not if that's right, but I believe it is.

MG How long did you work for the phone company?

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PT I retired the 1st of October, 1985. So that was 39 1/4 years.

MG You didn't stay in the same job for that whole time?

PT No. At the first of my employment in 1946, I worked in the line crew. Which I think there was six or seven of us in the line crew. And the St. Johnsbury was the headquarters at Cross' Garage. And then there was an opening in Morrisville, what they called installation repair. In other words you might be installing someone's phone or it was divided on repairing the lines in the case the line was broken or grounded or whatever. You divided your time between that and I stayed there until 1948. There was a vacancy here in Barre-Montpelier which was my home then since the war. And I stayed there until after the dial conversion. There were the crank phones as I mentioned before. And I came to Barre and Montpelier area and at that time the headquarters was where the City of Montpelier have their garage. There was talk of the Grand Union going up there, but that was the headquarters for where the, where the trucks were kept. And the State Office for the whole telephone company was a 2 Barre Street in Montpelier right where the laundromat is, right on the corner. And I don't think that it's, I don't think there were more than eight or ten rooms. That was for the, all the supervision and, and prior to that it had been in Rutland, but it had moved in Rutland I think maybe in the 19 teens to Montpelier. Maybe in the '20's I don't know. But it was still there in '46 and it seems kind of strange that they carried on all the business, of course it wasn't at the volume it is today and now they have the 800 Hinesburg Road. Are you familiar with that building with the copper roof?

MG What was the company called at that time, what was it?

PT New England Telephone.

MG Okay. Same as it is now. So apparently there was a big spurt at least in your observation in the number of telephones that were going in in Vermont around the time that you started working there?

PT That is right. I, they made _____ in the 20's, but after the war, that was when the demand for telephones was the greatest and it was really hard to keep up. It was, they would run a line and in no time flat it would be full. Then they'd have to run another. Of course now they use subscriber carrier which they can get more lines

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in with the carrier than they could then. But they didn't have them. They were all physical circuits then as far as subscriber circuits.

MG What do you think might have accounted for that growth in telephone service at that point after the war?

PT Well, it was really a good era. Everything was really booming. They hadn't made automobiles for a long time. Farm machinery, I'm speaking about the State of Vermont, and there were a lot of people in the rural areas at that time that didn't have electricity and they, they'd gone along, so really nothing much had changed too much except maybe the automobile and of styles of course, but really from when they first started in the 1900's, everything started to blossom and expand and of course the wages came up and some people had saved money during the war. They had saved it from their service pay or what not. Everybody was coming back and new homes were starting. People were, people didn't get married when they went in the service, but as soon as they come back, they married shortly, if they didn't marry when the war was over, they married shortly after within the next five years or more.

MG So it was a period of prosperity and general growth in the State?

PT That's right. I would say one of the biggest spurts in growth in the State of Vermont.

MG Were there people moving into Vermont from outside at that point?

PT Not, not too many people. Of course there were the out-of-staters so to speak that had their summer homes here. It might have been through some connection in the family or they just liked the area on the, on the lakes and what not around. And I think maybe some of the, some of the offspring from the campers, the kids liked it up here. I think they probably had a tremendous time in the, in the summer and they liked it here in Vermont and came back to Vermont. It may, I think probably some of the colleges here may have an inducement for some of the kids to come back. I don't know.

MG Were these changes reflected in any way in sort of a life style?

PT Well I remember back when we were first married until the Baker murder, that we never locked our doors, never locked our doors.

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MG When was the Baker Murder? I don't know what that was.

PT 1957.

MG And what was that?

PT Well, it was on Merchant Street. Is that right Pauline? On Merchant Street. You go in by the Magnet.

PT Where the Court House is now?

PT Yea, where the Court House is now. And this Baker and his wife ran a floor covering store. And someone, I think it was a Linoleum knife as I, as I under, as I remember, it was in February, about the third Wednesday in February. She was murdered in cold blood. She was, her body was mutilated. Another thing that I think has changed is certainly the politics. It's, it was all Republicans back then, for years and years and years. And then we got a Democratic Governor and I can't remember what year it was that, was his name Myers or Mayers that was the first Democratic Congressman from the Brattleboro, southern part of the State. And he was, he was in Washington. Can't remember who he opposed, but he was the first Democratic Congressman we'd had in years. I think 100 years.

MG Did that, did things change as a result of that?

PT I don't know, being a Republican, I kind of think so.
(LAUGH)

MG Let's go back to the phone company. You were telling me the different jobs that you went through in your period of tenure there.

PT Oh, so I stayed, I came to Montpelier about 19, they wanted to keep me in Morrisville. So I got my expenses and they wanted to keep me in Morrisville. Then I was kind of thinking of getting married. And we eventually did in 1949, July 2nd. But prior to that, I had to go, they wanted somebody to go to Bennington. They were going dial. They were pick up the receiver, get the operator, she'd get your number. So I think I was home a week before we were married and then primarily I stayed in the area. But from time to time, there would be a storm or there would be what we call the dial conversion, I would go dial conversion like I was down in Fairlee. I had quite a few of the places that changed over to dial and I worked at that job primarily through to 1970. But at the time that Barre and Montpelier went dial, they were looking for a spare test man. One that would test the

lines. People would call in with a trouble and you'd have to test the line to kind of determine where the man was going to go or person. It was all men then. It's gals and guys now, but it was all men then. (LAUGH) There were gals in the office and they were primarily the operators. Of course that's a mixed bag now. There's, there's male operators and female operators. But anyway they were looking for a spare man. So I spoke with Bernie Fitzsimmons and I said, "Gee, if you're looking for somebody spare, I'm kind of interested in it." So I was divided, if there was a storm, whether it be a snow storm or thunder shower, excessive trouble load, I'd go to work like I was going to in the morning, I would go to work like I was going to be out with a, with a truck. In fact, that green one there. I had one just like it when I first started. That was the first truck. It was second hand, don't get me wrong. That was 1946, but they were, motor vehicles were hard to come by at that time. We finally did get new trucks. But anyway, I'd go to work dressed to be working outdoors and I used to report, I don't know 7:30. I'd be down at the garage at 7:30 and they'd say before I got my orders to go out for the day, they'd say, "Well, you got to go down to the test board and help out." So that went along until about 1970 and there was a vacancy and I decided that the winters were long and cold and snowy and I thought well, "I think I'll get an inside job." So I think 1970 I was inside til I retired as a local test man. They call it local testing technician now, but that's what they did.

MG When was the conversion to dial, to dial tones completed?

PT 1960. There was the Northeast Kingdom. They were the last ones to go from crank to subscriber dial-a-zone 9.

MG And then I guess the next change was when touchtone came in?

PT Electronic?

MG Electronic.

PT And there again, I think Woodstock was the first ones with the, that you could have touchtone.

MG And isn't it, still aren't there in Barre still that you only have to dial four numbers within the City, no?

PT No. We went, it was November 6. In fact I went down. It was at 12:30 when they changed it over.

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MG What year?

PT 1988.

MG I thought it was fairly recent. Montpelier too, fairly recent?

PT Montpelier, no. They've had it since '78 haven't they?

MG I don't know. I thought, I've lived in Montpelier since 1980. I thought I remembered originally only having to dial 5 numbers and now having to dial the whole exchange.

PT Strange, the years slip by so. But it seems like it was, it was a number of years ago that Montpelier had the electronic switching.

MG Then that must be a reflection of again greater population and more telephones? They need a system to handle more...

PT Well with the electromagnetic switch, you need a big area. Are you familiar with the size of the building on Elm Street?

MG In Montpelier?

PT No, here. School Street in Montpelier.

MG Oh right. Ah, no.

PT But, I don't know just how, what the dimension of the building is, but now for the whole area it's smaller than this room that did the work. They had, they put on three additions down on Elm Street in Barre and I think they must have had at least three additions in Montpelier because the electromagnet, magnetic switches are about this tall and they're about this wide. And usually they come in groups of ten or fifteen or twenty. But now they can fit all this compact stuff like the, the Chelsea Office was about the size of this living room and the kitchen. And now I haven't been in the Chelsea Office, but they say it's not much bigger than the dimension of that piano or that area where the piano is.

MG Yea, I was speaking with a gentleman about another program in the series, Arthur Goodrich in Northfield and he's part of the Northfield Telephone Company. His father is one of the founders.

PT Yes.

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MG The room we were being, doing the interview in, in the phone company there, there was this box making a big hum, about the size of your TV, maybe a little bigger. And I said, "What's that making all the noise?" He says, "That's the phone company." And that was it. Right there in that box.

PT Yea.

MG So it's all transistors and computerized and miniature things?

PT Yea, plug ins.

MG Uh huh.

PT If the unit goes bad, I think on some of that, they can even, it even pinpoints which unit is bad and they just pull that small unit out that's almost wafer thin, pull it out and plug it back in and that's it.

MG Wow.

PT Now Theodore Vale, he was President of American Telephone. And he had a camp, hunting camp or lodge, in Groton as known as the Seyon. He sold it to Noyes Buick in Arlington, but they changed the name around, reversed it, Seyon, Noyes. And he used to spend some time up there. So of course that was way back in the wilderness. Well I don't know whether, I assume it was through his influence that they built a, what we call a toll line of toll circuits, that went from Montpelier to Wells River and thence on the Connecticut, to hook up with the farther through. So the engineer engineered it and the toll line went from Montpelier and skimmed the East Montpelier Road, come over Beckley Hill, cross over what we call Perkinsville and headed for Spruce Mountain and it went within 2 or 300 yards of Vale's camp. So he was able to have a what they call a gold plate line. He'd just pick up the receiver and he would get Boston. And so he had a telephone line. In fact that was a open wire line and it was, been over it a number of times and it was, wasn't too bad in the summer except for the black flies and the terrain. It was really a rough terrain. So I don't know whether it was a toss up, toss up whether you'd go over with snowshoes or whether you'd go over in the summer. (LAUGH) But that was about 12 or 13 miles between roads. And once you got in there, you'd have to patrol it you know. Make sure there weren't any glass broken, where hunters had been or whether a tree was on the line and

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what not. That was strictly maintenance. It used to be patrolled twice a year, in the Spring and in the Fall just before the snow come.

MG And it went that way just because the President of the phone company had a camp there?

PT Well, we all suspect that that was why, why the line went there. He had a place in Lyndonville which is now part of the Lyndon Teachers College, Vale Manor. Have you ever seen that?

MG No, I don't believe so.

PT It was quite a, it's quite a, it's quite a building. That was his summer home. Now I don't know the connection whether he married a gal from Vermont or whether his forebears came from Vermont or not, but anyway he had this, well it was called the Vale Mansion. Quite an impressive place.

MG When was he President of the phone company?

PT I have to look it up.

MG That's okay.

PT In the, in the 1900's.

MG Yea.

PT Okay, "In 1878, Hubbard hired Theodore Vale as General Manager. He'd been a telegraph operator and station agent for Union Pacific. But his ambition led him to preside over the Federal Railroad Mail Service in Washington." And then of course there was a mix-up, there was quite a lawsuit at one time with Western Union and the Telephone Company because they thought that telephone and telegraph, you know, American Telephone and Telegraph, but anyway, they, I think it was settled that Western Union would do the telegraph portion and American Telephone would do the, will do the telephone. Okay, in 1885, then two years, it says, "1880, the grand design for the Bell System," because they were all like you know these little small companies. "The grand design of the Bell System began to crystalize with American Bell Telephone Company organized to serve as a parent company of the _____". Then two years later, Vale bought control of the Western Electric Company which was the manufacturers and suppliers of telephone and associated equipment." In other words, from nails to snowshoes, to gloves, to switchboards, to motor

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vehicles, everything was handled through Western Electric. That was the supplier from soup to nuts. "So then two years later, Vale bought control of Western Electric so that he would always be assured of ready supply of standardized equipment. In 1885, the company was completely, completed by in cooperation with Theordore Vale as President of American Telephone Company." 1885.

MG Oh.

PT But as far as working for the telephone company, they had specifications so it didn't matter whether it was Northwestern Bell or Potomac or Southern Bell, a telephone man other than learning the geographic locations, he could install a phone and a phone was installed the same in Barre, Vermont as it was in Pasadena, California, exactly the same. Certain specifications and you'd have no problem. So you could have gone nationwide. In other words, if I would have gotten tired of living in Vermont, I didn't and I won't, but we had, I had several friends that, some went to California and some went to Florida, but they could. I'm close to 4:00. I don't know when Vale did die. It was, well when I first come to work, I didn't know a lot of the operators, but we used to have these union outings and it didn't make any difference if the man was a line foreman down in Brattleboro, you knew who he was. There was installer/repairman up in St. Johnsbury, Island Pond, you knew who he was. Somebody in St. Albans. Now that we are a field, maybe in the metropolitan area, Burlington, but you knew most of them. But today, I can see the telephone trucks go by and I wonder who in the devil that is. Nobody I'd ever seen before.

MG Much bigger company now.

PT But it was...

MG And a different feeling I guess.

PT But it's a, really a tremendous thing and I think that it's too bad that the _____ ever took place.

MG Really.

PT Because in the first place if you were having any problem with your phone recently? Well if you do, God help you. In the front of the book, under the A's, there's American Telephone and there's all kinds of numbers. And you may dial a number; I'm only going by what people tell me. You may get the right person, but eventually you'll get to

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someone. But when you have trouble, you don't know whether it's with your telephone which could be like I said made by GE, made in Taiwan, Philippines, Singapore, Korea or it could be a genuine American Bell telephone. But not necessarily made in the United States. I got one that says AT & T on it. You know where it's made?

MG Where?

PT It's touchtone. Made in Singapore, but yet it says AT & T on it. Got it through AT & T. And it's really too bad because until 1980, January 1, 1984 was it or 1983 I don't know, January 1st, we had the best telephone system in the world, we did. And now there's disgruntle people and I sympathize with them but there were some people they really wanted, they thought the telephone company was taking advantage of them. But they really weren't. A lot of the local service was subsidizing, being subsidized by the toll charges. But to, I remember, it was only \$5.00 to get a telephone put in. They started from scratch, did the whole thing, you got a phone. You paid monthly rental on it, but you, you got a phone. It was only about \$5.00 installation fee. It wasn't till just a few years ago that if you wanted a jack, they were \$5.00 and I think they went up to \$10.00, but now there's a scale. I don't know I did have the work scale, but it's so many in 15 minute increments and it's so much.

MG Well I think I got what I need and I appreciate those other names that you've given me. There's just one more thing which is