

# No trouble found

Art explores great lies, old lines and equal access



Some time ago, I mentioned that the last span of the 1914 transcontinental telephone line would not come down in my lifetime. Was not about to shell out 10 grand for traffic control to scrap it out. The 600-foot span was supported by twin-guyed structures. Many No. 8 copper strands inside the boxed cross arms supported by tensioned guys side to side. I-80 roared underneath.

Earlier this year with the Elko district supervisor and the Nevada DOT chief on a conference call, we made a deal. If they did the traffic control, I (my guys) would drop the span.

OK. Nov. 21, 2002. The evening prior, we positioned a bucket truck on the north end. The next morning was a beautiful day. My guys sat and watched as NDOT took an hour to set out traffic cones three miles in either direction. Then closed the freeway.

A gas torch cut all wires and messengers. The span dropped. By minute 9 two of our trucks had winched the wreckage clear of all traffic lanes. State crews swept glass. At minute 14, traffic was released. NDOT taped it. Said we were good! We've asked for a copy.

We had the wreckage loaded and gone before highway recovered their cones. End poles still stand. There is a big bird's nest on the south framework. Probably leave that until we receive a get-out-of-jail card from some bird-watching agency.

## INSURANCE

Nick deJong lectured: Watch out; no firm does estate planning without having a hand in writing the insurance policy. This from my telling him one of the recommended ways of achieving liquidity for the company was to use proceeds from a life insurance policy on principal owners. Without such, most companies are sold to pay taxes. What was not said was that nearly all the first year premium goes to the guy who steered the account to a given life insurance company.

## FAHRLÄSSIGKEIT AND EQUALITY

Finally got a new plotter driver for a HP engineering printer to work with

Microsoft XP. Only comes in German. Can you say it?

Our customers hate equal access. So do we. We bought hundreds of AT&T credit cards from Sam's Club. It permits dial-around toll to AT&T for 3.5 cents per minute. For those who wanted us to mail the card, we tacked on a few bucks for handling costs. Customers recharge them with any bank credit card. Were I AT&T, I'd wholesale the cards to all us telcos. Our customers love us.

## FLYING HIGH

The Navy has a training range for its fighter pilots at Fallon, Nev. Seems every time, the NexRad weather (on the evening TV news weather segment) radar goes white (sometimes during the newscast) and certain telco microwave trunks crash. The Navy has been flying specific low-level ECM training. Doesn't help to complain as always — no trouble found.

Greg Killpack runs Emery County Telephone —and runs it very well, I might add. A co-op. They bought from Qwest 100 or so subscribers at Hanksville, Utah. There are seven leased lines to the remote FAA facility at its rural airport. He pulled the public service coin phone Qwest maintained there. Why? He said they were not earning any money off it. Jeez, Greg, my Beehive profits come from toll minutes — and we encourage public use for that purpose. Our coinless phones allow free local calls. But calling card or collect do earn minutes of use and serve the public. We're supposed to do that.

We use a small aircraft to "go fast" over the 500-mile separation between some of Beehive's service areas. Salt Lake City International Airport has a tiny airport in Tooele Valley for little planes to practice at — as opposed to cluttering the airspace around the big airport. We used to buy gas there, until SLC replaced the automated pump with a costly unit inside a locked fence. Use the phone to find out the password to open the gate. The phone didn't work. The number to call was in a different area code and there was toll restriction. They fixed it — really fixed it good. Users soon found out they could call toll-free anywhere.

Then the dispenser kindly gave \$2.10/gallon gas away. Had we known, I'd have brought a truck. Months later — still no gas. They say pump problems. No kidding. **AN**

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PHONES ALLOW FREE  
LOCAL CALLS. BUT  
CALLING CARD OR  
COLLECT DO EARN  
MINUTES OF USE AND  
SERVE THE PUBLIC.  
WE'RE SUPPOSED  
TO DO THAT.**