Telephony 101 –Touchtone and Other Standard Telephones January 25, 2013

Hello All,

As always, please send any questions about the reading assignment directly to me at oldtimetelephones@goeaston.net. I will bundle questions if necessary, repeat the questions, and give answers in an e-mail to the TCI List Server before moving on to the next reading assignment. This way everyone will benefit from these questions and answers. By sending questions directly to me, we will avoid unnecessary clutter on the List Server. Previous reading assignments, notes, questions, and answers are available in the TCI Library at http://www.telephonecollectors.info/telephony-101/.

Please read the rest of Chapter 14 on standard telephones on pages 92-98.

Tone dialing was a big deal, and the only comprehensible description (IMHO) of how touchtone dials work is coming in Chapter 19. But accommodating a touchtone dial in an existing exterior design was relatively easy such that there is a touchtone counterpart for every rotary dial phone of this entire period. In the latter part of this period, though, designs deviated from the strictly utility shape of the standard 500-types to include Princess-like phones and Trimline-like phones. The same pattern of standardization prevailed with these specialty phones, with Stromberg-Carlson and Kellogg pretty much taking the whole Western Electric design, and with Automatic Electric manufacturing similar, but not identical, phones. Tables 14-1 and 14-2 give the names of all of these look-alikes.

Most of my information on the designs of this period was obtained before there was a Google, and I didn't have a network of friends in the Bell System. So I started the old-fashioned way: 212-555-1212, "Is there a Henry Dreyfuss Associates in New York?" I got the number and it got me right to the top – well to the desk of the secretary of the guy at the top. By that time, Henry himself had passed away and the top dog was Donald Genaro. I exchanged several letters with Genaro (I got to call him Don) and struck up a more extended dialog with a student intern named Russell Flinchum, who was working at the firm while writing a Ph.D. thesis on the designs of Henry Dreyfuss. Russell went on to work at the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt design museum in NYC and later ask me to lend them Dreyfuss-designed phones (21 pieces in all) for an exhibition. But that's another story.

As you will read, Donald Genaro had become somewhat of a star himself as the principal designer of the Trimline telephone, which has received a lot of recognition in the design community. My favorite is the rotary-dial wall-mounted Trimline with an LED dial light. It's the perfect bathroom phone (you never want to dial out from there, but the phone always rings when you are in there).

No other technology that I know of has such a definite end as the electro-mechanical telephone. On January 1, 1984, when the old Bell System was broken up by a court order, design and manufacturing of these rugged telephones took a nose dive and almost everything since then has been a product of the electronic age. Although the electronic age of telecommunications is awesome almost beyond belief, our story ends on that day. In the following chapters we will re-

trace the entire developing period of the telephone looking at the electrical circuits of these old phones. To me, the circuits are the most interesting part – and if you passed the pop quiz after Chapter 7, you are among a small group of people who will be able to understand it all. Please stay tuned.

If there are any questions about the current reading assignment, we will deal with the questions before moving on to the next reading assignment.

Ralph