

# My wireless services



During August 1903 I was telegraph operator at Palm Springs Calif, on the S P Ry relieving regular operator that month. When he returned he excitedly told me: "they have a wireless station at San Pedro which exchange messages with Avalon, Catalina Island, and they are looking for a man". He said he would very much have liked to try for the job but did not want to jeopardize his seniority on the S.P. So I went to San Pedro and talked to Mr Senor, chief operator for the company (The Pacific Wireless Telegraph Co). They were then using American Morse, and I had no trouble putting down about 95 percent of the stuff sent from Catalina. Reception was thru ear phones. Resigned from the S P extra list, broke in for 2 weeks at San Pedro and then went to Catalina Island (Avalon) where I worked for about a year and a half.

At Avalon, the wireless station was up on the hill above "Sugar Loaf" and the source of power was a gasoline engine that drove the electric generator. Breaking the sender was impossible. At the end of transmission the receiver asked for the words he lost, after starting the gas engine. The Los Angeles Times sent over their synopsis of the days paper - 400 to 600 words, which was the main content of a small paper which was set up and printed at Avalon and sold on the street at 10 Cents. Called "Wireless News".

In February 1905 The Pacific Wireless Telegraph Co put up a station at 7th and Alameda <sup>S.F.</sup> and I was in charge there sending messages direct to Avalon. In February 1906 I was called to S.F. to help with the station they were then building on top of Mt Tamalpais which was to reach Honolulu. We had our own cook and stayed right there with the construction gang. Also during that time we put a small station on top of The Merchants Exchange Bldg, with an office on the 14th floor. The earthquake hit S F April 18th 1906. One tower on Mt. Tamalpais which was up, was wrecked. The Merchants Exchange Bldg gutted; fourth day after the quake left SF for LA.

Was out of wireless work until about November 1908 when the United Wireless Co sent me first to Hotel Green in Pasadena for several weeks and then to San Diego. I have no recollection whatsoever of who hired me or the company's home office, have no correspondence, clippings or pictures. The object of going to San Diego was to establish contact with ships which might have radios, coming thru the Panama Canal. The station was on top of the Granger Bldg, 5th and Broadway. It did not last long - cannot say how long - when I was advised to close the station, I was married then and to pay our rent went to work for Hillers, delivering groceries. In 1910 I noticed in the paper that a wireless Company (Federal Wireless Telegraph Co - Poulsen Arc system) were active and spreading out. I then went up on the Grant Hotel and looked over the roof and possibilities of putting a station up there. Saw the then manager Mr Holmes, who was sympathetic to the idea. Then wrote to the Federal Wireless Co in D.F. & explained the situation at San Diego and especially the Grant Hotel. The following week their chief engineer called at Hillers for me and we went over to the Grant Hotel. After he had looked the roof over we talked to Mr Holmes & they came to terms as to rental figure, permission to bore thru cornice for anchor bolts etc. The Chief engineer said to me "we will send you the blue prints from D.F. also insulators and cables etc and you are in charge of putting up the masts and building a small office building on roof. When everything was finished they shipped the set (transmitter etc) with all the gear necessary to bring the DC current (500 volts) up from basement where the direct connected Motor generator set was located. We tried it out and it functioned OK. Then I got a messenger boy and scrambled for business in competition with U.S. and Postal.

The Poulsen Arc system was very hard for amateurs to pick up, but the Western Union and Postal people used the argument that our messages could be read by all the amateurs and did discourage some of my customers.



the fall of

I am not sure but I think it was in 1915 when a heavy 3 day storm hit San Diego. It started blowing from the south, then slowly veered around and finished blowing from the north. Heavy rains accompanied the wind. The Otay Dam went out and the resulting flood carried live stock, houses etc down to the ocean. <sup>there also was some human loss.</sup> In fact the U.S. Navy had a destroyer standing by to rescue any people caught by the flood at the mouth of the river.

San Diego was isolated as far as communication was concerned except the wireless on the Grant Hotel. I handled the messages for the Pac I & O, War and Postal - to their LA offices in regards to reestablishing their lines. In addition I handled thousands of words sent out by reporters for the press service. I stayed right at the Grant Hotel for the three days at the request of Mr Holmes + as his guest. The clerks at the main desk in lobby acted as receivers for me - they knew the rates - and Oscar my messenger boy brought them up to me. Suffice it to say that after the third day I took the money I had taken in during the three days to the bank and asked the teller to please count it and credit our company. There was over \$1200.00 in the mean and there were charge accounts of our regular customers. Those three days and nights were the most hectic in my telegraph career. All our press dispatches went out with the heading "Via Federal Wireless Telegraph Co" and gave a tremendous boost to the reliability of wireless.

The morning of April 7, 1917 I was sworn in as Chief electrician U.S. Navy active reserve, was sent to Pt Loma and served until the end of World War I. The station on the Grant Hotel was of course closed down and the Federal Co leased a wire to LA.

After the end of World War I came up to DT and worked at "Goat Island" for 8 or 9 months as civilian radio operator, working on the Honolulu (NPK), Balboa (NBA) Washington (NSS) circuits and also naval Pac Northwest stations. Then when that appropriation was exhausted we went back into the naval reserve, when the naval reserve was discontinued (temporarily) went to work for 12th Naval Dist (Communications) <sup>Civil Dept</sup> in SF, last 9 years Mare Island, where I retired after the 2nd world war in 1945.

At Goat Island for the navy worked one circuit from Grant direct to DT. How far's Diggins but its quite a stretch. Poppers are system (navy)