

## AUTOVON SITE CUTOVER

Topaz Lake, Nevada  
April 3, 1970

Most telephone system switching office "cutovers" are events of great public interest, and as such are treated with considerable publicity and ceremony. Toll type cutovers are generally less obtrusive in nature and, as in the case of the recent TOPAZ-AUTOVON cutover, if military security is involved the incident can go by virtually unnoticed except by those involved. The lack of publicity does not indicate a lack in importance, and the Topaz cutover, while being handled quietly and methodically, was not without its moments of apprehension.

It was 8:00 P.M., an hour and a half since I had left Reno to visit the Topaz site for the final cutover of the AUTOVON network reconfiguration. I now stood at the door awaiting admittance. I thought about the past several months - the meetings, the long hours, the schedules to be met, the problems and the accomplishments of my crew, eleven craftsmen and two managers all working together, and with the other departments and companies, toward the goal which was being culminated tonight.

Sixty existing switching centers throughout the continental United States were involved. Seven new centers, including Topaz, were being added, and two discontinued. The magnitude of the total project was impossible to describe, both for security reasons and because of its complexity.

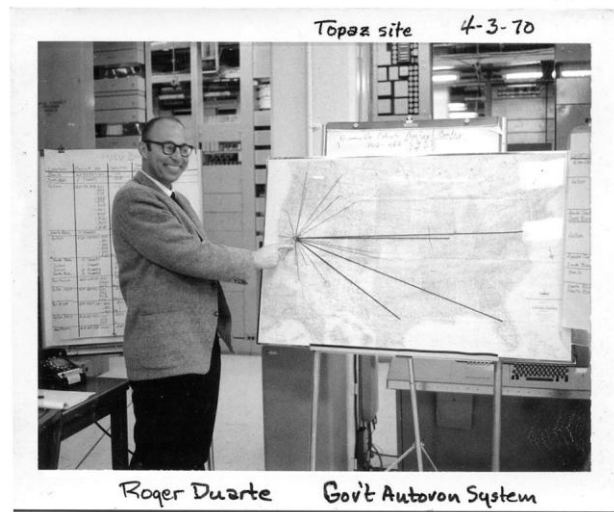
As I thought about the Importance of the project and the site itself (wrapped in concrete and security) I became awfully aware of the silence and calm surrounding this cutover. By design there was no publicity or ceremony. Here was I, the only one on the scene without an active part in the action. I felt a chill in the night air as the door was opened and I was admitted. Franklyn Elliott, Transmission Man on duty, logged me in, issued my security badge, and I was "on board."

Inside the building - shining bright and well organized - I recognized Ray Corrigan, senior transmission man, at the progress status board. Don Rose, a senior man, was busy at the communications order wire. Nearby Gary Miller, transmission man, was reorganizing a set of patch cords recently removed from cutover circuits.

The silence was not unlike that of a hospital at night. The life-blood of the communications network coursed silently through the myriad of wires, vacuums and solid state devices. An error or wrong move on the part of one of these well trained, keyed up individuals could result in the catastrophic failure of that "blood-flow" of communications, and could mean the loss of hundreds or thousands of circuits; millions of bits of Information. But no errors were made that night.

We made small talk during the moments between functional operations, and I made a perfunctory survey of the radio and carrier bays. As always when I view the equipment and test gear, I got that old feeling of nostalgia to work with the hardware and to realize that sense of accomplishment that comes with it.

Now the Supervising Toll Wire Chief, Roger Duarte, came in from the nearby Continental Telephone Company building, which houses the electronic switching machine and toll testboard positions. As plant coordinator for the project, he briefed me on the progress and status of the cutover then invited me to visit the "switcher" building.



"There are more lights and action over there" he said.

We stepped off the 200 or so paces to the Continental building in the crisp evening air. It was calm, and clear as only a mountaintop environment can be. We arrived at the door, pressed the call button, identified ourselves to the voice on the speaker and were given admittance.

Inside, as in our Bell System building, the floors and equipment were neat and impressive, but even here a dedicated, quiet atmosphere prevailed. Occasionally, the subdued sound of a minor alarm gong was heard and there were some very busy lights making themselves visual at the test positions.

Two of our transmission men, George Chapin and Ken Geisinger, were methodically working at the boards; turning up circuits, making call-thru tests, checking the signaling tones. Then a case of trouble with a jack circuit; a cooperative effort with the Continental telephone men and the problem was quickly located and efficiently corrected.

Everything was going smoothly. It was 9:30 P.M. Roger and I decided to get some coffee before the 10:00 P.M. target date, when the machine was to be "cutover" to the network.

Over coffee we reminisced a bit, recalled other projects, other times, and of course got back to this job at hand. We felt good that all of these men had done their jobs so well. The Continental people, all the men working that night and the others of our crew on different shifts; Chief Transmission Man Dale Fowler, who would be on hand the next day, transmission men Jim Davis, Phil Flynn, Steve Johns, Dean Radtke and Art Uren (recently promoted to Chief Transmission Man In Reno) were all part of the team that worked to make this night a success.

It was now almost 10:00 P.M. so we made our way back to the equipment room. Soon Dranesville Control was saying, "OK Topaz, you're now part of the AUTOVON NETWORK. Congratulations and good luck!"

There was still work to do. There would be some minor troubles. But there was a tremendous attitude of pride on the part of everyone present, a well deserved pride of accomplishment.

It was perhaps anticlimactic for those so closely involved, but to me it was a climax worthy of a whole celebration. But because there was none, I felt compelled to report on the events of the evening as I have now done.

To all of you at Topaz, Continental Telephone and Nevada Bell, "Congratulations." And to my gang, my special thanks for the job well done!



G. A. Phelps, 4/4/70

[The above manuscript was submitted to the Nevada Bell public relations department, and was subsequently published in the *Nevada Bell News*.]