
Independent Telecommunications Pioneer Association

Pioneer Connection



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Founded 1920

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National Spring Assembly—A Weekend in Mayberry



Incoming President Leon Yard and his assembly committee welcomed Pioneers to Mayberry for the 32nd National Spring Assembly. Before sharing highlights of this year's assembly, the folks who worked hard to make it happen should be recognized. Thank you to the following individuals who served on this year's assembly planning committee:

Leon and Brenda Yard
Cindy Downing
Daniel and Lu Barnhardt
Kyle and Tara Anderson
Ronnie and Janet Cashwell
Ryan and Kimberly Rice
Melinda Niday
Ann Beck
Cammie Brazzell
Hannah Lancaster
Jim and Paige Venzcel

Long before Pioneers began arriving for the 32nd annual spring assembly, this planning committee was hard at work planning the weekend's events. Finding a suitable location, arranging for meeting space, rooms, food, activities and more, requires a significant time commitment and includes travel to the assembly destination to finalize details on site.

If you've never attended an annual assembly, these events are packed with an equal share of business and fun. Here's a high level summary of the weekend's activities. (Don't worry, there are plenty of additional updates and photos from this year's assembly throughout this issue.)

Day 0: About 20 eager Pioneers arrived on Thursday. Some traveled long hours and used the extra day to rest and recover. Others were busy unloading supplies, decorating, and readying our meeting spaces. The planning committee worked late into the evening to prepare for the weekend's activities. After a short break to share a wonderful meal at *13 Bones BBQ* it was back to work. Some of the group even worked until midnight!

Day 1: Early arrivers shared a tasty breakfast together at *Coach's Neighborhood Grill* and quickly got to work. There were auction items to handle, a registration desk to set up, and numerous other details to attend to. Board members for the Charitable and Historical Foundations and the National ITPA met at a picturesque farmhouse on the grounds of Sheldon Vineyards and Winery. These individuals dedicate time throughout the year to keep our ITPA active and strong. The evening's festivities featured a Bluegrass band and a Mayberry-themed costume contest, and several Mayberry characters made an appearance.

Day 2: After an early buffet breakfast, outgoing President JoAnn Esposito addressed the group. Guest speakers from the Alzheimer's Association and Pawsitive Action Service Dogs were presented with \$1,000 each from the Charitable Foundation. (Pawsitive Action is the charity of Choice for incoming ITPA President Leon Yard.) Saturday afternoon featured squad car tours and we visited the Andy Griffith Museum in Mount Airy.

Day 3: Our morning began at 7am with a delicious buffet breakfast, followed by a morning devotion presented by Janet Holliday-Cashwell. JoAnn Esposito called the annual business session to order. More than 70 guests attended the Telephone Hall of Fame Luncheon. Mary Lou Jackson Forsyth of Darien Telephone Company was inducted into the Telephone Hall of Fame, and Ladson (Lad) Adville Barnes, Jr. of Comporium was posthumously inducted. The luncheon was followed by an awards ceremony and the spring assembly formally concluded after an evening buffet, after which our newly elected officers were installed. Pioneer friends gathered in the hospitality room afterwards to continue their fun and fellowship.

Day 4: After an early breakfast and many goodbyes, we're off. The 32nd annual spring assembly is in the record books. See you next year!



32nd Annual Spring Assembly, Cont'd





32nd Annual Spring Assembly, Cont'd





Telephone Hall of Fame Luncheon Photos



Ronnie Cashwell, Historical Foundation President, welcomes attendees to the Telephone Hall of Fame Luncheon



Melinda Niday arranged beautiful Mayberry-themed centerpieces for the luncheon. Each table featured a Mayberry character.



Hall of Fame Luncheon attendees enjoy a meal in honor of this year's inductees.



Inductee Mary Lou Forsyth, with daughter and co-worker Mary Alice White.



Family members attended the luncheon in honor of Ladson Barnes, Jr., who was posthumously inducted into the Telephone Hall of Fame.

Above left to right: Melanie and Shaun Barnes with their daughter Vivien Barnes, Ladson Barnes, son of Mr. Barnes-wife of grandson Shaun Barnes with baby Vivien and their cousin John Barnes,



Above: Shaun Barnes accepts the Telephone Hall of Fame Book in honor of his grandfather Ladson Barnes, Jr.



Appreciation to Assembly Sponsors

A lot of work goes into planning and paying for our annual spring assembly. Each year, the 1st Vice President is responsible for appointing a planning committee and executing a memorable gathering, which includes acquiring sponsors to help offset the costs of executing such an endeavor. Sponsorships help keep registration fees at reasonable levels. Meeting room rentals, meal catering, and hospitality activities all come at a cost. Leon Yard and his planning committee did an excellent job this year to help make our gathering affordable, enjoyable, and memorable.

Sponsors contributed greatly to the success of our 32nd annual spring assembly, and we are deeply grateful for their support. Sponsorship options for this year's assembly were: Diamond (\$2,000), Platinum (\$1,000), Gold (\$750), Silver (\$500), and Bronze (\$350).

With gratitude, we recognize the following sponsors of the ITPA's 32nd Annual Assembly:

Diamond Sponsors



Founded in 1911, Darien Telephone Company has been proudly independently owned and operated for more than 100 years. Located in historic Darien, Georgia, the company's leadership team is deeply invested in the community and customers they serve. Mary Lou Forsyth, President was inducted into the ITPA Telephone Hall of Fame in April 2024.



Now in its 130th year of operation, Comporium was founded as Rock Hill Telephone Company in 1894. Headquartered in Rock Hill, S.C., Comporium provides residential and business services in all or parts of several counties in South Carolina and North Carolina. Ladson Barnes, Jr., who was posthumously inducted into the ITPA Telephone Hall of Fame this year, served Comporium in several leadership roles, including Chairman of the Board.

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Hannah Lancaster, Chesnee, SC
Paige & Jim Venczel, Chesnee, SC
Bryant Family Foundation, Hinesville, GA





ITPA National President Leon Yard Announces this Year's Charity of Choice



ITPA President Leon Yard welcomed Ray Fernandez and Mattie, his K-9 companion, to the spring assembly as guest speakers. Ray and Mattie represent *Pawsitive Action*, a non-profit organization that matches veterans with service dogs and life companions to enhance their quality of their life.

Leon is passionate about services for veterans, having been deeply impacted by the sacrifices made by those who serve our country. Leon's biological father died in Vietnam in 1972 and his stepdad died from issues related to the use of agent orange that was used in Vietnam.

Ray Fernandez is also passionate about helping veterans and in fact he served our country through the United States Marine Corp. Ray joined the Marine Corps in 1966 at the age 17. He had dreamed of being a Marine for as long as he could remember, and he recalls that one of the greatest days of his life was when he graduated from boot camp at Parris Island and became a full-fledged Marine. Ray's father attended his graduation commencement ceremony as a proud father and a combat veteran. His dad came in at Omaha Beach and fought with General Patton all the way into Germany during World War II.

Ray served in the Marine Corp for four years with a thirteen month tour in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969. And while he's honored and proud to have served his country, he relates to his audiences that the experience changed his life in incomprehensible ways.

All war wounds are not visible, and Ray's emotional and mental wounds caused his life to become quite chaotic after his military service. So much so that in 2017 when a Marine buddy called Ray to wish him a happy birthday, he encouraged Ray to schedule an appointment with a VA hospital to be evaluated. The friend told Ray, "Fernandez, I am 100% disabled from the war and you are more crazy then I will ever be. You need to go to the VA get help and be evaluated." Ray heeded his friend's advice and in addition to being diagnosed with severe hearing loss resulting from his war experiences, he was diagnosed by several doctors as having severe PTSD.

Ray underwent years of treatment and was prescribed numerous medications with no significant improvement nothing changed and he became more frustrated. Finally, after years of his psychiatrist's urging, he did what she asked and went to *Pawsitive Action Service Dogs* to request a service dog. Initially it was quite difficult, but after six months Ray's everyday life began changing for the better. He found that having a buddy took him out of his own head as his focus was always on the dog. Life became a little more tolerable. That buddy was Mattie, and she became his best buddy. With Mattie's help, Ray was able to more easily go to stores, doctor's offices, and occasionally a restaurant, all of which was previously very difficult or impossible. When Ray realized how drastically his life was improved with Mattie's assistance, he began volunteering with *Pawsitive Action* to help other veterans who might benefit from having a service dog. Ray knows that veterans are often forgotten about, and his mission is to try to bridge a gap and help meet their needs. *Pawsitive Action* allows Ray the opportunity to help provide other veterans with the same assistance he received. He is grateful.

Funds raised through the caricature sessions, raffles, silent auction, hat sales, individual donations, and the ransom for Myrtle the Turtle were donated to *Pawsitive Action*, resulting in a \$2,000 donation in addition to a \$1,000 Charitable Foundation donation.

If you would like to help veterans through *Pawsitive Action Service Dogs*, you can do so by visiting <https://www.pawsitiveaction.org>. You can also follow *Pawsitive Action Service Dogs* on Facebook.

Pawsitive Action, located in York, SC, serves veterans at no charge. Full Access Service Dogs are available to veterans who need a "ready to go" dog to accompany them in to public places. These dogs help veterans with mobility challenges, PTSD, anxiety and other conditions.

Pawsitive Action also has a Life Companion program through which veterans who already have a dog or who receive a dog can enroll their K-9 companion in basic obedience and Canine Good Citizen training. Advanced training is also available.



Pioneering Excellence Award Presented to Daniel Barnhardt

Daniel Barnhardt was honored with the Pioneering Excellence Award during this year's annual spring assembly. Daniel was a Region 3 recipient of the John Knox Johnston Award in 2018.



Daniel joined the Comporium Pioneer Club in 2007 and has been a steadfast volunteer, donating his time and talents whenever and wherever he can.



Daniel has held several offices on the Comporium Pioneer Club board. In 2016, when he served as 2nd Vice President, his responsibilities included overseeing fundraisers. Daniel's contribution to the Fire House run during that tenure helped make that fundraiser exceptionally successful.

When Daniel served as the club's president, he was instrumental in creating, planning, and executing an Open Arms Gala for the homeless in York County and in the Snowman Insulator project. Daniel's contributions to his community and to the Comporium Pioneers are extensive. He is always "all in" for any service project the Comporium Pioneers undertake, and he is particularly about anything to do with Veterans and soldiers, so much so that he purchased toy soldiers and gave them at events he attended, reminding people to remember our soldiers when they pray. Daniel always puts in extra time and care when it comes to our warrior heroes. Daniel always goes the extra mile in every project he's involved in.

Cindy Downing, who has worked with Daniel on several Habitat for Humanity projects, said of Daniel that



after he served as team leader on a particular Habitat for Humanity project for a homeowner he did not know, he still shows up to help whenever the homeowner calls on him.



In addition to his Comporium Pioneer activities, Daniel is a director at large with the Palmetto Chapter and he currently serves as ITPA Treasurer. He was the National ITPA President in 2022, and he has not missed an ITPA annual assembly since the first one he attended.

Daniel shows up every single time, whether for small projects or large, and he makes an enormous difference in the lives of those he serves.



Leon Yard, current ITPA President, said of Daniel, "Daniel is a true Pioneer, a volunteer through and through! I've never heard him say "no" to anyone that asked anything of him. He is willing to do whatever is needed whenever it is needed without complaint and he generally has ideas to make things even better." Congratulations Daniel!



Jim Hoskinson is John Knox Johnston Award Recipient

Congratulations to Jim Hoskinson, recent Region 2 recipient of the John Knox Johnston award. This award is the highest regional honor bestowed by the ITPA to individuals who have made consistent significant contributions to their community through Pioneering. Jim has been doing that since 1986 when he joined the Moundbuilders Pioneer Club in Newark, Ohio.

As a Moundbuilder Pioneer, Jim participated in numerous service projects over the years and he served on the club's board. He held various offices and served the club faithfully until it disbanded. He then transferred his membership to the Buckeye State Chapter. He has continued to actively serve his community and the ITPA through the Buckeye State Chapter. Jim has served in several capacities for the Buckeye State Chapter and he currently serves as the Chapter's President. Jim and his wife Linda have attended several national spring assemblies.

Jim seeks out opportunities to let others know about the ITPA and encourages new membership. He consistently looks for ways to help communities and support projects. Jim walks for Alzheimer's Research, follows up on chapter information even while he snowbirds in Florida, and he collects items for the local Salvation Army in Newark, Ohio. Regardless of the size of the project, Jim is there to help and to enlist help from others. He is an active contributor to "Pennies for Pioneers," the Buckeye State Chapter's signature project/fundraiser that funds scholarships and other projects.

Darlene Roll, Region 2 Vice President, said of Jim, "Jim is a positive role model, encouraging Pioneers and others to be involved – locally, in the state or region, or at the national level. We are proud to have Jim as a member of the Buckeye State Chapter team, the region, and national organization."

Darlene presented Jim with the John Knox Johnston award during the annual spring assembly awards ceremony held in Dobson, NC. Thanks Jim, for setting a great Pioneering example by serving in your community and by supporting your fellow ITPA Pioneers. Congratulations on a well deserved recognition.



Top row: Jim presents Charlotte Baker with John Knox Johnston award and presents scholarships awarded by the Buckeye State Chapter.

Bottom row left: Jim is a bit of a card shark when he's not volunteering. Bottom row right: Jim regrets taking the dare to try those beer flavored chips..





Club and Chapter News

Clubs and chapters are encouraged each year to submit at least one project award application for community service projects they sponsor during the prior calendar year. While the applications are judged, and award recipients are announced during the annual spring assembly, these submissions are about much more than winning an award. They provide tangible evidence that our clubs and chapters across the United States are embracing the mission of the ITPA, which is community service!

This year, 21 clubs and chapters submitted project reports for the 2023 calendar year. The project applications were grouped based on club size and each class is judged by project category.

Class A Clubs = 1 to 30 members

Class B Clubs = 31 to 100 members

Class C Clubs = 101+ members

Project categories are:

Community Enhancement: projects that help the entire community, not just one group or individual. Public education, community awareness, health fairs, and health screenings are examples of projects that fall into this category as well as various fund-raising events such as Relay for Life or Alzheimer's Walks.

Human Services: projects that provide a tangible service. Financial support and donation of items such as food, clothing, vehicles, or toys may fall into this category.

Life Enrichment: projects that entertain or provide the element of "human touch" or one-on-one interaction.

Spirit of Service: projects that publicly promote the value of telecommunications.

National Project: fosters a sense of unity throughout the organization, providing all clubs and chapters an opportunity to support common charitable goals. This category recognizes innovative and special efforts to support national projects. While monetary contributions are important, greater emphasis is placed on ingenuity and participation. National projects include those which support Alzheimer's, blood drives, disaster relief efforts, education and troop support.

Pioneer Choice: features projects that are unique and do not fit into one of the five categories but are worthy of recognition.

Clubs may also qualify for the **Founders Award**, which is presented to the Chapter or Club achieving the best overall performance during the Pioneer year. Eligibility for the Founders Award requires an entry in each of the five community service categories. The eligible club or chapter must also have conducted a membership campaign and must have sponsored a fellowship event or social activity during the year.

This year's Awards Committee, chaired by Ann Beck, traveled to Rock Hill, SC at their own expense to review the project submissions. Congratulations to all of the clubs/chapters that received award recognition during the annual spring assembly this year, and a big thank you to all of the clubs and chapters from across the nation that worked together to serve their communities.

Even if you don't submit applications for your projects, we'd love to include your Pioneering projects and photos in the quarterly Pioneer Connection Magazine. You can send club news anytime to dterry625@gmail.com. (In addition to publishing your club news in the magazine, take advantage of the new Chapter and Club page on the ITPA's website. Visit <https://www.nationalitpa.com/news>.)

Thanks for keeping the Pioneering spirit alive by continuing to serve in your communities. Keep reading to learn about projects that our clubs and chapters from across the country undertook.





Club and Chapter News Cont'd

National Project—Kickstart Kindness

Submitted by ITPA President JoAnn Esposito

Last year all Pioneers were invited to participate in Kickstart Kindness. At the conclusion of this project period, Pioneers were asked to notify ITPA President JoAnn Esposito of their participation. Those who did were entered into a drawing for a \$50 gift card. We received notice of participation from members of Florida's Big Bend Club, Carotel Club, Comporium Pioneer Club, Mid-Ohio Club, and the Buckeye State Chapter. The winner of the drawing was Ethel Mason, a Buckeye State Chapter Pioneer. Ethel won a \$50.00 gift card and will make one of Myrtle the Turtle's hatchlings very happy to have a new home.

Buckeye State Chapter

Buckeye State Chapter Pioneers volunteered more than 100 hours to help others through their "Willing Hands to Help Others" project, and received a 2nd place award in the Class C Human Services category. The Buckeye Pioneers donated food, clothing, shoes, money, and their time. They helped food pantries and the Salvation Army, prepared weekend meal bags, served meals at drive-thru pick-up locations, visited elderly neighbors, and much more.

Comporium Pioneer Club

Congratulations to the Comporium Pioneers for receiving the Founder's Award for their 2023 projects. Not only does it take a lot of team work to meet the eligibility requirements for the Founder's Award, but it is also quite a commitment to document all those projects. In 2023, Comporium volunteers donated 1425 hours towards 31 club projects, several of which were recognized with Class C project awards.

The club's "Wreaths for Christmasville" project received a 1st place award in the Community Enhancement category. Christmasville is an annual holiday festival that celebrates the joy and magic of the holiday season. A variety of activities, including live performances, art exhibitions, holiday markets, and festive decorations take place throughout the city.

In the Life Enrichment category, Comporium Pioneers received a 1st place award for their "Special Olympics Bowling" project. The team assisted athletes in groups of 4, providing varying levels of assistance based on each individual bowler's abilities. Afterwards, the Pioneers assisted in the awards ceremony and were reminded of the motto those special athletes embrace: "Let me win; but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt." And they all were.

Comporium Pioneer Club Cont'd

The club's "Lancaster National Guard Soldier Lunch" received 1st place recognition in the National Project category.



Comporium Pioneers have been a long-time supporter of the SC National Guard, and when they were asked by their National Guard liaison to provide lunch for soldiers and their families on a planned "family day" before the soldiers deployed, the club rallied together and served more than 250 people.

In the Human Services category, Comporium Pioneers received a 1st place award for their "Helping Charlie" project. A veteran and Comporium retiree, Charlie was hospitalized with leukemia. His home and yard needed quite a bit of work to make the space safer for him when he returned home. Charlie's only son was stationed in Ohio with the military and had only a few days to get everything completed. After learning of Charlie's situation, the Comporium team mobilized quickly and handled the yard while Charlie's son managed the interior. The Pioneers cleaned, hammered, raked, mowed, blew leaves, and hauled debris. They even made some plumbing repairs. In just one day Charlie's home was barely recognizable, and offered a safe refuge for Charlie's return.

The club's "Haven Men's Shelter Cake Auction Fundraiser" received the Spirit of Service 1st Place award. Businesses and non-profits were asked by the shelter's director to donate a themed cake and a gift basket related to the theme. Comporium Pioneers donated a hummingbird themed cake and gift basket for the fundraiser. Organizations that donated were publicly recognized, and the Comporium Pioneers were able to share information about their club, the ITPA, and the Pioneering spirit.

Comporium received a 1st Place award in the Pioneer Choice category for their project that was "Christmas Gifts for Seniors." The Pioneers worked with staff members at a local assisted living facility to obtain wish lists from residents. Club members were so enthusiastic about this project that they had more Christmas shoppers than residents participating. As a result, all of the wish lists were fulfilled, making their hearts merry, but not merrier than the jolly group of folks who presented the gifts.



Club and Chapter News Cont'd

Carotel Club

The Carotel Pioneers received a 2nd place project award in the Class C Life Enrichment category for their ongoing project “Encouraging Others.” This project consisted of a series of efforts throughout the year, such as karaoke to seniors, writing notes to shut-ins, and donations to food banks.

Carotel Pioneers also received a 2nd Place award for their “Honoring our Protectors” project. Various events were held throughout the year to recognize first responders, veterans, active military, and health care providers. During the club’s annual convention, a veteran’s appreciation ceremony was held, and 18 veterans in attendance were presented with commemorative coins that was recovered by coalition forces from the banks of Basra, Iraq during the war in 2003. Project volunteers also wrote thank you cards and prepared and served meals to local first responder teams across multiple counties.

Florida Big Bend Club

The Big Bend project “Girls Can Do Anything” project supported girls who attended a summer camp sponsored by the *Oasis Center for Women and Girls*. Big Bend Pioneers collected more than 300 cardboard cylinders to be used for craft projects, and they donated art supplies to encourage the girls attending the camp to use their artistic imaginations. Oasis Center is known as a place where women and girls are valued, supported and celebrated, and the Big Bend Pioneers helped do that through this project. The Big Bend Club received a 2nd place award recognition in the Class A Human Services category.



Mid Ohio Club

Mid Ohio Club Pioneers continue to assist families with food insecurities by donating funds and non-perishable foods to food pantries in the communities they serve. In some of the areas served by the Mid Ohio Club, as many as 20% of the population experiences food insufficiencies. Congratulations to the Mid Ohio Pioneers for helping combat hunger through their project “Giving to Meet the Need” and for their 3rd place award in the Class A Human Services category.

North Star Chapter

The North Star Chapter Pioneers continued their ongoing support of the Alzheimer’s Association and received 1st place recognition in the Class B National Project category. Chapter volunteers spent 179 hours and raised nearly \$2,000 for the Alzheimer’s Association in 2023! Since the project’s inception, the North Star Chapter has raised more than \$64,000 for Alzheimer’s research!

North Star Chapter Pioneers also received a 1st place award in the Human Services category for their “Charity and Memorial Donations” project. Through this project, 37 Pioneers donated over 175 hours and more than \$2,500 to the following non-profit organizations: Bountiful Basket Food Shelf, Children’s Cancer Research Fund, Feed my Starving Children, Red Cross and Tunnel-to-Towers. That’s a lot of hours and dollars to help other non-profit organizations serve those in need!

Tar Heel Chapter

The Tar Heel Chapter project “Angels for Angels” recognized caregivers at an adult day care center. Tar Heel Pioneers, who have long supported clients served by the Life Center of Davidson County, expanded their support to include an appreciation gesture to the center’s caregivers. This project, which received the 1st place award in the Class A Pioneer Choice category, consisted literally of making angels for angels. Those who care for others are often called angels, and the angels made by Pioneers from kitchen towels and hot pads, were presented to the caregivers, recognizing them for serving others.



Club and Chapter News Cont'd

Palmetto Chapter

A long time supporter of the Haven Men's Shelter, the Palmetto Chapter provided numerous food items to ensure clients of the shelter received a hearty breakfast before heading out to their mandatory jobs.

Chapter members filled carts and filled hearts by investing in men who are working hard to change their circumstances and their lives. They also supported a 74-year old veteran, gifting him with a basket of necessities and small appliances as he transitioned from homelessness. The Chapter's "Haven's Men Shelter Food Collection" project received the 1st place award in the Class A Human Services category.



IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT



The ITPA website now includes a page specifically dedicated to club and chapter news and events. This page is intended to be a dynamic platform through which clubs and chapters can publicize their activities in real time.

Some clubs and chapters have already taken advantage of this opportunity to add their newsletters and other information, such as scholarship applications. You can check out updates that those clubs and chapters have added by visiting <https://www.nationalitpa.com/news>.

Please let us publicize activities and events sponsored by your ITPA Pioneer club or chapter also! You can add registration forms for your annual gatherings, retiree luncheons, information about upcoming or recent projects, and more.

To add your content to <https://www.nationalitpa.com>, send an e-mail to our Public Relations Chairperson, Darlene Terry at dterry625@gmail.com. Please add "Club/Chapter News for Website" to the subject line of your e-mail.



The "Club & Chapter Resources" page of the ITPA's national website is a repository of useful information. You can find the up-to-date Guidelines Manual, ByLaws, Awards Submission Packet, Annual Reporting Forms and more. You can also request an updated A-Z list for your club or chapter.

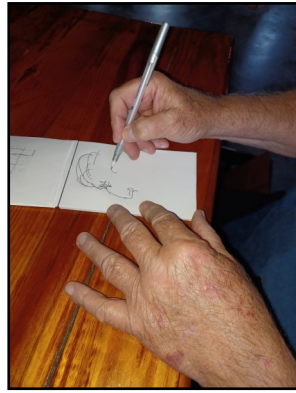
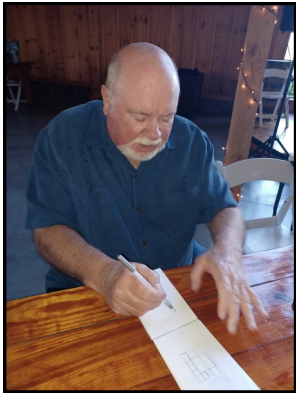
At <https://www.nationalitpa.com>, hover your cursor over "Member Resources" and you'll find the "Club & Chapter Resources" option, along with other pertinent topics. Or, simply click on [Club & Chapter Resources - ITPA \(nationalitpa.com\)](https://www.nationalitpa.com).

You can also find back issues of the Pioneer Connection through the "Member Resources" page. If you haven't already signed up to receive e-mail notices when the Pioneer Connection is published, select the "Publications" option on the "Member Resources" page to subscribe. Our member subscription list is never shared with third-party vendors.



Charitable Foundation News

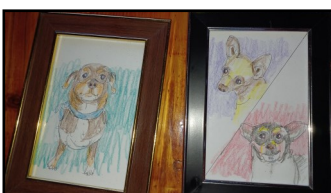
On behalf of the entire Charitable Foundation board, President Darlene Roll extends a hearty thank you to **Bill Schnitzer** for donating his time and talents to raise money for our foundation. Bill, a talented caricaturist, set up a corner shop during the spring assembly and drew caricatures on demand for an enthusiastic audience. Bill's efforts raised \$200 which was donated by the Charitable Foundation to *Pawsitive Action Service Dogs*



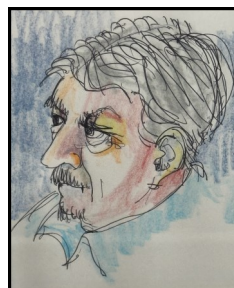
Bill joined the Florida Big Bend Club in 1999 as a family member. Long before that, he supported many Big Bend Club projects with his wife, Nancy, who joined the ITPA in 1984. Bill was an art major in secondary art education for his bachelor's degree (Northern State College, South Dakota) and taught art in K-12 as the art specialist in Casper, Wyoming for three years. After he and Nancy moved to Florida, he gained a Master's of Urban and Regional Planning degree from Florida State University in 1974.

Bill is a man of many talents and doesn't mind taking on big jobs. At one point, Bill donated his artistic talents to create stage props for a variety show presented by the Big Bend Pioneers. He jokingly began his caricature drawings two years ago at his morning coffee group, having quickly sketched out caricatures of a friend and then of customers who requested one. He quickly became known as "Leonardo de Napkin" since he used the table napkins at the coffee shop to draw his sketches.

Over the years, Bill has continued volunteering his time and talents, not only with Pioneering, but through Special Olympics as a District Director and member of the State Board of Florida Special Olympics. Prior to his recent caricature session, Bill had only caricaturized people. However, after several prospective clients presented him with pet photos, he quickly adapted his handiwork to include a number of beloved four-legged friends.



*Above: Bill delighted pet enthusiasts with his renditions of their four-legged friends.
Right: Ronnie Cashwell makes for a mighty fine caricature subject!*



The Charitable Foundation provides ongoing support to the *Alzheimer's Association*. Worldwide, 55 million people are living with Alzheimer's and other dementias. Alzheimer's disease is a degenerative brain disease and the most common cause of dementia. Corey O'Donoghue, Director of Program Services for the Alzheimer's Association, was a guest speaker at the ITPA's recent spring assembly, and she shared news of exciting advances in Alzheimer's research. The Alzheimer's Association is the largest non-profit voluntary health organization engaged in researching causes and cures for Alzheimer's and dementia.

After Corey's presentation to assembly attendees, a \$1,000 donation was presented for the Alzheimer's Association by the Charitable Foundation. For more information on Alzheimer's and important advancements on the treatment of that disease visit <https://www.alz.org>.



The Charitable Foundation also presented a \$1,000 donation to guest speaker Ray Fernandez for *Pawsitive Action Service Dogs*, to help provide service dogs to veterans. Funds raised during the assembly through the silent auction, merchandise sales, raffles, mascot ransom, and the caricature sessions were also donated to *Pawsitive Action Service Dogs* resulting in a total donation of \$3,000 to that organization.



- 2024 Charitable Foundation Officers and Directors
- Darlene Roll, President
 - Nancy Schnitzer, Secretary and Treasurer
 - Jo Myers, director
 - James White, director
 - Ronnie Cashwell, director
 - Darlene Terry, director
 - Jan Jeffrey, director



Historical Foundation News

We are enjoying an increasing number of visitors to our Telephone Museum. Recently, Susan Pitts, a retired switchboard operator visited our museum. Originally from Massachusetts, Susan now lives in Savannah, GA and she visited the museum with her neighbor after seeing one of the local television commercials featuring the museum.

Museum volunteer Bob Hertling assisted ITPA Executive Director Andrea Wick with the tour. Susan demonstrated for them how she would operate the "Cord-Board". During the tour Andrea recorded videos of Susan, as her demonstration was highly entertaining and informative. Susan plans to return to the museum and expressed interest in joining the ITPA as a member!



More recently, a large group of teenagers were among the 29 weekly visitors to tour the museum. The girls were intrigued with the telephone displays and were extremely attentive as Andrea explained various exhibits.



Susan reminisces about her days as a cord board operator during her museum visit.



2024 Historical Foundation Officers and Directors:

- Ronnie Cashwell, President
- Morrie Sachsenmaier, Vice President
- Nancy Schnitzer, Secretary
- Jo Myers, Treasurer
- Leon Yard
- Jim Jolly
- Becky Hollis

The ITPA Telephone Museum is generally open to the public Monday through Friday from 10 am - 4 pm. Visitors are encouraged to call before visiting (912-408-4872) to ensure the museum is open on the day of the desired tour, as there are times when the museum must be closed during normal operating times. Groups are requested to call ahead to schedule tours. A suggested donation of \$3.00 per person is appreciated to help maintain the museum.



2024 Hall of Fame Inductee Mary Lou Forsyth



Mary Lou Jackson Forsyth was inducted to the ITPA Telephone Hall of Fame on April 28, 2024. Mrs. Forsyth is a lifelong resident of McIntosh County and currently resides in Pine Harbor, Georgia.

Mrs. Forsyth was joined by family, friends and co-workers at the Telephone Hall of Fame luncheon, which was held during the annual spring assembly.

A graduate of Darien High School, Mrs. Forsyth attended Florida State University briefly before officially beginning her career with Darien Telephone Company in 1960. Her involvement with the family company's daily operations, however, began at a much younger age.

The Darien Telephone Company came into existence with humble beginnings. In 1911, the Darien City Council issued a Business Franchise License for two businessmen to construct, maintain, and operate telephone lines in the city of Darien. In 1921, Mrs. Forsyth's grandfather bought the small company, and thus began the legacy of the Jackson family's Darien Telephone Company in McIntosh County. In 1942, Mrs. Forsyth's parents, Dick and Bessie Jackson purchased the company from his mother.

Mrs. Forsyth grew up in the independent telephony world. She recalls that when she was about 10 years old, she would run the switchboard by herself. By the time she was a teenager, she was accustomed to the company's day-to-day operations.

She officially joined the company as an employee in 1960 as the company's bookkeeper. In 1985 she assumed the role of Vice President of Darien Telephone Company, and upon her mother's passing in 1989 she was named President.

The Jackson Family has now owned and operated Darien Telephone Company for more than 100 years, during which time five generations of the Jackson family have served in leadership positions. Mrs. Forsyth now shares the corporate officer positions with her daughter, Mary Alice White, Vice President, and her grandson, Richard Jackson Thomas, Chief Financial Officer. Mrs. Forsyth and her family have continued to keep alive a pioneer-type dedication to providing the best possible communications for its customers in Darien and McIntosh County.

A significant impetus for the company's growth during the Forsyth family's leadership occurred in 1959 when U.S. Senator Herman Talmadge assisted with the acquisition of a nearly half-million-dollar loan from the Rural Electrification Administration to convert the entire telephone system into a dial system. By 1961, the company was serving 734 telephone stations, and by the end of the 1960s, direct dialing assistance was offered to all Darien Telephone customers.

In 1972, Darien Telephone Company purchased Atlas Utilities and merged it into the growing network of Darien Telephone customers. By 1976, Darien Telephone Company had all one-party services available in its Eulonia and Darien Exchanges. In just ten years, the number of telephone lines—business and residential, grew to 2,253. In 1986, Darien Telephone converted all of Darien, Eulonia, and Sapelo Island exchanges, consisting of over 3,000 telephone stations. Following industry innovations, Darien Telephone launched a local internet access point in 1996, Darientel.net.

Darien Telephone Company has grown from three employees—when Mrs. Forsyth began her tenure, to forty-five employees today. She feels fortunate to have been able to hire a number of McIntosh County families over the years. Darien Telephone Company now maintains more than 584 miles of underground telephone cable throughout McIntosh County. The company's use of this technology began in 1961 when the use of underground telephone wires was a pioneering idea, thus continuing Darien Telephone Company's many years of commitment to environmental and ecological preservation. Mrs. Forsyth is proud of the technology and high-quality of service her company offers to its customers. She is grateful that the community has been good to her and her company over the years, and she tries to give back to the community whenever possible. She strives to contribute to the continued growth of McIntosh County and her goal is to continue offering cutting-edge technology to her company's new and existing customers.

In addition to her wonderful work in the telephone industry, Mary Lou is renowned for her cooking and charitable work, which led the effort in 2004 to publish a fundraiser cookbook, "Something to Talk About", which includes a superb collection of favorite recipes that reflect Georgia Coastal living and eating. Copies were sold to help raise money for various community projects. Mrs. Forsyth is also an active member of the First Baptist Church, in Darien.

Friends and affirmed Mrs. Forsyth's dedication to her company, her employees and her community. Her daughter, Mary Alice, who works alongside her mother daily, said "I'm blessed to have a wonderful mother, a great co-worker, and my best friend rolled into one."



2024 Hall of Fame Inductee Ladson Adville Barnes



Ladson (Lad) Adville Barnes, Jr. was inducted posthumously into the PA Telephone Hall of Fame on April 28, 2024. Several family members and Comporium employees attended the Telephone Hall of Fame luncheon held in his honor during the annual spring assembly.

A third generation telephone industry family member, Lad gave life-long service to the Independent Telephone Industry to which he devoted the entirety of his 72-year career. He served in many operational capacities from 1949 until his passing in 2021 and was a pioneer in the practical aspects of telephony and in the delivery of service to individual customers in urban and rural areas.

Lad's grandfather purchased Rock Hill Telephone Company in 1912, and since then the Presidency and the Chairman of the Board positions have been held by family members. The telephone industry was in the family DNA, and new technologies and means of delivering expanding services were topics of conversation at the family's dinner table during Lad's formative years.

Lad served in the U.S. Military from 1943 to 1946, reaching the rank of 2nd Lieutenant Infantry. After graduating from Clemson in 1948 with an Engineering degree, he returned home to work for the family company. He helped his company adopt technological advances to keep the company on the cutting edge, enabling the delivery of superior services. Lad used his leadership and managerial skills to train and support his team in the field, and he modeled a polite, professional, and positive image of the company and the industry. His operational roles helped developed the practical side of communication services, and he was insightful and forward thinking in the delivery of excellent customer service.

After the family's purchase of the Fort Mill Telephone Company, Lad transferred across the river and eventually assumed the role of Vice President of Operations. When the company merged with Comporium in 2001, Lad became Vice Chairman of the Board for Comporium, and he later served as Chairman of Comporium's Board of Directors for several years.

As Director, Vice Chairman, and Chairman of multiple industry boards, Lad was required to focus on the bigger, longer ranging trends within the telephone industry. Lad understood the need for and importance of independent telephone companies to the communities they serve, and he participated in company efforts to positively influence legislation affecting the same.

Without fail, in any role in the community he played, he conducted himself in a manner which reflected positively on his family, his company, and the independent telephone industry to which he belonged.

As a member of the Comporium Pioneer Club and a Life Member of the ITPA, Lad advocated for participation in activities which mutually benefited telephone pioneers and the communities they served, shining a positive light on the role of independent telephone companies in society. He was inducted into the South Carolina Telephone Hall of Fame in 2006.

Lad valued education and served on The York Technical College Foundation Board for more than 30 years, including serving as President for 5-years. He was an avid supporter of his community and during his life he participated in and assisted multiple philanthropic organizations, including the Lions Club, Huguenot Society of South Carolina, and Unity Presbyterian Church in Fort Mill, where he remained a member until his death. He was also an Advisory Board Member of C&S Bank. Lad was named Citizen of the Year in 2002 by the Fort Mill Chamber of Commerce. Rather than retire, Lad stepped out of the Chairman role to focus more on handling shareholder matters and enjoying his family. Lad also had a great appreciation of the outdoors, having spent many hours on his grandparent's farm as a young boy. Later in life, he indulged his love of the outdoors primarily through golfing and fishing.

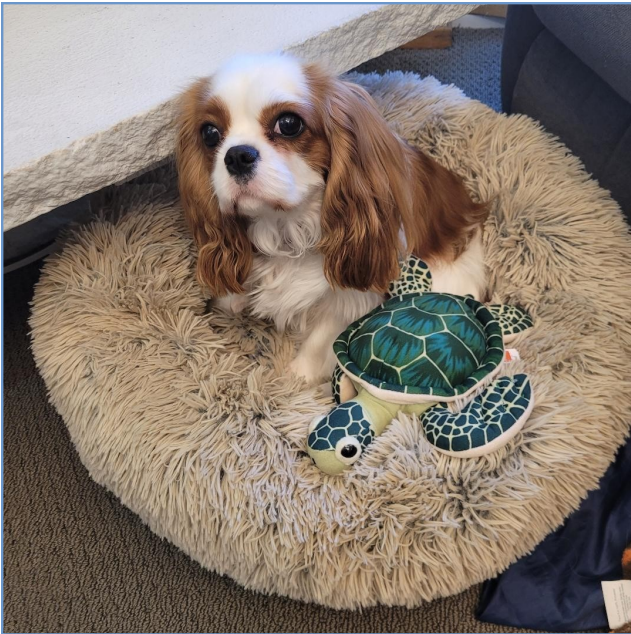
Lad married Martha Nelson Beard on April 3, 1943, and they had three children, six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren during their forty-seven years of marriage. Martha passed away in February 1990. Lad later married Rosanne Jeter Moore and added six children, fourteen grandchildren, twenty-six great-grandchildren, and one great great grandchild to his family.

Preceded in death by Rosanne, Lad was the final remaining member of the Barnes family's third generation. His passing marks not just the loss of a friend and great leader, but also the end of an era. He will always be remembered for his warm, genuine personality and his smiling face.



Farewell from Myrtle

My time as your mascot has come to an end. It was my honor to represent the ITPA Pioneers this past year, despite my frequent turtle-nappings. I traveled far and wide with many Pioneers. I visited Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia, and Washington. I also cruised to the Bahamas and visited a few state aquariums to encourage some injured sea turtle friends. While I was in Washington state, I spent some time in with Piper, our 2023 pet photo contest winner. That K-9 knows how to show a turtle a good time!



I wanted to take some flying lessons at the regional airport in Snohomish County, WA, but was disappointed that I didn't meet the height requirement.



I visited The Snohomish Community World War Memorial with Morrie Sachsenmaier.

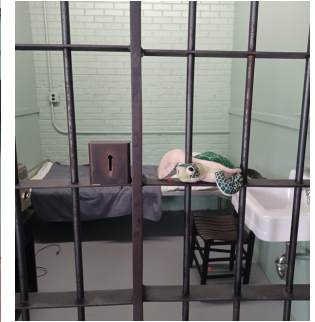
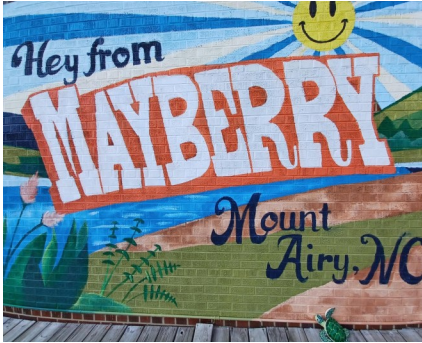


This 12' 5" diameter log is from a Douglas Fir felled in the Lake Roesiger District, Snohomish County in Washington state by Lervick Logging Company on June 15, 1940. The tree was estimated to be 620 years old.



Farewell from Myrtle, Cont'd

As my time as your mascot came to an end, I traveled back in time to Mayberry, NC to attend the spring assembly. It was all fun and games until I was jailed for impersonating the sheriff.



Fortunately, some kind-hearted Pioneers bailed me out, and then the fun really started. They took me on a tour of Shelton Vineyards and afterwards there was a wine tasting!



After checking in at the hotel, I helped the registration team set up and snuck a peek at JoAnn. She never even knew I was there, even when I was hidden in plain sight in the Carrot Patch (hospitality room) centerpiece.



I thought for sure that JoAnn would rescue me when Ronnie Cashwell nabbed me to help with the sound equipment. He tucked me into that Briscoe Darling hat, though, and as far as I know, she never even knew it was me doing all that work!

Well folks, this is the last you'll see of me, unless you visit the National Office and Museum. I'll be joining all the other former mascots there. My yearlong adventures are also chronicled on YouTube at [The Wild Adventures of Myrtle the Turtle](#). Be nice to Hunny Bunny. She's already been bunny-napped, but I know you'll take her on lots of fun adventures.





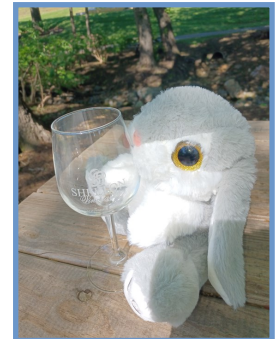
Hunny Bunny's Hare-Raising Tails

Welcome to the first edition of “Hare-Raising Tails.” Get it?.. hare-raising (cause I’m a hare) and “tails” as in cotton tail rabbits! My tenure as your mascot started off in typical fashion for a “wabbit.” No sooner than Leon Yard had announced me as his mascot, Elmer Fudd came bursting in and held him up at gunpoint! Before anyone knew what was happening he had backed Leon into a corner and snatched me from him! If you didn’t see the that bunny-napping live, Elmer’s dastardly deed was captured on video and you can see for yourself what happened on the ITPA National Office & Telephone Museum Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=358330900022871> (copy this link into your browser) or click on [\(9\) Video | Facebook](#)

I’m sure you’ll want to know a little about me, before I begin sharing my “tails,” so here are some fun facts about rabbits:

- When I was a baby, I was called a “kit.” As a female, I’m referred to as a “doe” and male rabbits are called “bucks.”
- I’m a social creature and I prefer living with a group.
- My teeth never stop growing!
- When I’m happy, you might see me perform a “binky,” which is an athletic leap. I can twist and kick in mid air!
- I, along with all other rabbits, have well-developed muscles on my hind legs.
- My eyes are on the sides of my head so that I can see almost all the way around me. This helps me keep a close watch for predators.
- When I’m content and relaxed, you might hear me purring just like a cat.
- I’m a pretty spectacular athlete; I can jump nearly 3 feet in one leap.
- Besides being adorable, my long ears can turn and they help me hear predators who want to eat me!
- We rabbits are pretty effective baby-makers. Mother rabbits are pregnant for about a month and they give birth to up to 14 baby rabbits, called kittens, in a single litter.

Despite the fact that I was so abruptly separated from Leon, my first month as your mascot has been one exciting adventure after another. Before leaving Dobson after the spring assembly, I toured Shelton Vineyards and Winery, which has the largest vineyard in NC. They’ve won numerous awards in wine competitions. I sampled a bit of their sparkling peach wine after my tour, and it was fabulous! But enough about them, and more about me.

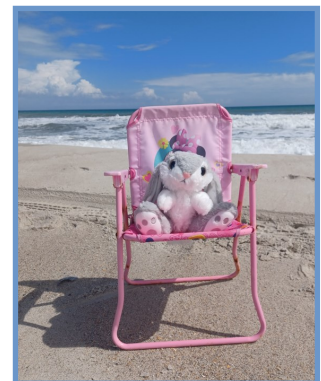


I’m currently vacationing at NC’s beautiful Crystal Coast. I’ve spent a few days sunning on the beach, and I’ve even learned to kayak!

And before you ask, yes rabbits can swim and yes, my life jacket was in easy reach.

Later this month I’ll be visiting that famous au-

thor Jan Karon at a tea she’s hosting! I sure hope I can have my photo taken with her! I’ll share that and more of my hare-raising tails in the next Pioneer Connection!





A Letter from Past President JoAnn Esposito

Dear Pioneers,

This past year has been a very busy year for me and the Pioneers. One of our RVPs resigned, our treasurer Jo Myers retired after over 20 years, and Alissa Moss our Executive Director resigned to pursue a new career. We did find a new Executive Director, Andrea Wick, and Daniel Barnhardt, one our past presidents accepted the position as Treasurer.

It was fun going to Hinesville, GA for my assembly. People were able to see the museum and Bryant Commons Park. Lots of tiny turtles were hatching in the Turtle pool. As I write this letter, Myrtle the Turtle is still missing but she will be in Mayberry for the new assembly (I hope).

I would like to say “thank you” to the Executive Board for all of their support and for helping me make some rough decisions. It was a pleasure serving with you.

I would also like to express gratitude to the board members. Attending the Fall meeting and all the monthly calls helped keep this organization going.

I ask that everyone give their support to Leon Yard, our new president. With your support and help, he will be a great leader for our ITPA!

Thank you all and may God bless each and every one of you and your family.
JoAnn Esposito – Past President.



Above: JoAnn addresses assembly attendees during the Saturday morning business meeting.

Left: A poignant moment...JoAnn is reunited with Myrtle after raising enough money to meet the ransom demand.

Right: JoAnn presented project awards to club representative Pat Whalen.





President's Page

Greetings ITPA Pioneers,

I want to Thank the Assembly Committee members as well as all the other folks who contributed to the success of the Return to Mayberry theme. A special shoutout to Bill Schnitzer for his artwork and donation of his time and funds. For all that attended, the Crew from *Coach's Neighborhood Grill* asked that we share our experiences with the restaurant and crew members on google and/or trip advisor as a great place to eat and the friendliest staff to work with.

I'm honored to serve as your National ITPA President, and I'm grateful to the officers, directors, and committee chairs who have agreed to serve with me this year. In case you're wondering how all of that comes about, officers and directors are recommended by the nominating committee or through floor nominations during the annual spring business meeting and are elected annually by designated club delegates. Committee chairs are appointed by the incoming president.

Bylaws of the Charitable and Historical Foundations require that nominees asked to serve as directors for those organizations be Pioneers who are current on their annual dues. The national ITPA board votes to accept proposed nominees to those boards, and the newly elected board members then elect officers within the respective organizations.

If you are interested in serving on the national ITPA leadership team, please contact JoAnn Esposito, our nominating committee chairperson, at espogirl56@yahoo.com.

I am looking forward to a great year for our group! Hope to see you soon!

Sincerely,

Leon Yard



Above: Leon kept new mascot Hunny Bunny protected as he made introductions to Pioneers. Little did he know Elmer Fudd had infiltrated the building. Fudd waited n hiding until Leon was distracted and snuck up on him. Caught by surprise, Leon had no choice but to surrender Hunny Bunny. Elmer Fudd raced out of the building with Hunny Bunny. The bunny-napping was caught on video and was posted to the National Office & Museum Facebook page ([\(1\) Facebook](#)).

Investigators of the bunny-napping have learned that Ryan Rice was impersonating Elmer Fudd ,and he had an unknown number of accomplices. Thus far, no ransom demands have been made, although several social media posts seem to indicate Hunny Bunny is being well cared for. The wascaawy wabbit seems to be enjoying herself.



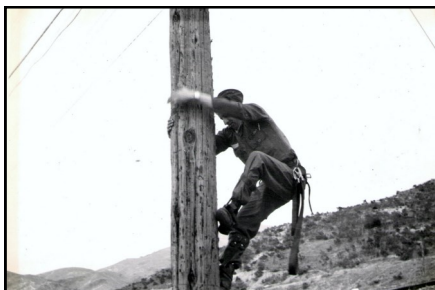
Member Spotlight

This month our member spotlight shines on Fernand (Fern) Letellier and Wil Leighton, Pioneers with the Down East Club in Region 1. Fern currently resides in Sebago, Maine, and has been a member of the Down East Club since its inception in 1981. Wil, who now resides in Mount Dora, Florida, is also a long-time member of the Down East Club and the two men have shared many experiences together as Pioneers.

We asked Fern and Wil to tell us about themselves, their telephony career, their Pioneer activities and their life beyond telecommunications. Here are their stories in their own words.

Fern:

"My telephony career began in the 1950s when I enlisted in the Army. After basic training, I was transferred to Fort Gordon, GA where I attended Cable Splicing School for 16 weeks. I started with field wire splicing and then lead covered cable.



During training I climbed poles to install a 10-pin cross arm, ventilated man-holes, and took classes on testing equipment, trouble locating, and repair.

At the time, we had lead sheath cables with paper insulated copper wires, and we had to be careful when working with **HOT** lead.

"After school I transferred to Fort Lewis, WA and shipped out a few months later to Korea where I served for more than a year in the Eight Army, Company A "Signal Long Line Battalion." We maintained local and long Line lead cables in lower South Korea and K9 airstrip. We had many long days and nights in field and rice patties repairing cables that were cut down or damaged by storms, heavy rains, theft, etc. Our work was mostly in the rice paddies rather than along the roadside, so we were on ladders most of the time. Winter was cold with wind, rain and snow, and summer was hot and humid.



"I returned to the USA in 1959 and was assigned to the Tobyhanna Pennsylvania Depot for the duration of my tour, working in the cable department and shipping. I also became a member of the Honor Guard and Drill Team until my honorable discharge in 1960.

"In June 1962, I joined Saco River Telephone Co. in Bar Mills, ME. This was a small telco with two men doing all the outside work except when the son of one of the owners added a third man to our crew during his summer vacations from school. The company employed three women who worked in the business office. Several months after I joined the company, I attended Stromberg Carlson XY school in Rochester, NY. Our two-man crew maintained two switches, set poles and bird wire, installed new services. We mostly dealt with repair calls though, and it was a busy time with many after-hours call outs. Eventually, I gained the plant manager title.

"I met my wife in December 1969 at a small dance hall. She became my bride in June 1974. Seven children later, we're still enjoying life together.

"In 1982 I decided to move on in search of more challenges and a better future. I started and operated a small excavating construction company. For several year I worked in the Sebago, ME area. After several years in the cold Maine winters and after dealing with numerous shutdowns in the area I sold the company and returned to telephony, working for Mountain Ltd. I was also an inspector for Contel Telephone Company in upper New York state overseeing construction for a buried cable project. I later worked as an outside plant project planner for several exchanges in the same area. I worked at Mountain Ltd. for 12 years, mostly in the New England States as a senior engineer.

"In 1992, GTE purchased the Contel properties in the New England states and I worked on the conversion to GTE technology, working with Microsoft equipment and training employees. In 1997, GTE sold its New England properties. At the time, I was working in Vermont, and I stayed on with Vermont Telephone Company. At the time, my major project was designing an Internet system for 26 exchanges. I stayed with Vermont Telephone Company until 1997 as an engineering manager and worked with assignment groups. I then moved to Maine to work with FairPoint as Inside Plant engineer. My major project there was upgrading the dial-up internet system to the latest technology for all the company's exchanges from Fryeburg to Fort Kent. I handled all of the special circuits, etc.

When I retired in 2001, I went back to Vermont Telephone Company on a part time basis for a couple of years.



Member Spotlight (Cont'd)

"I've been a Pioneer for many years. I joined the Tane (Telephone Association New England) Club in the late 60s or early 70s when 15 years of service in the telco industry was a requirement. I joined the Down East Club of Maine as an original member when that club was established in 1981. Through the years, I have served on several committees for both clubs. I went on to serve as Vice President of the Down East Club and have been president for many years. I also joined the Lions Club and served as treasurer.

Retirement has kept me busy. I repair small equipment (lawn mowers, trimmers, chain saws etc.)

I cruise my 1968 Ford Torino GT to area car shows that are held on weekends in the summers and I've brought home quite a few trophies.



Above: My first new car!

I'm a Sebago Days Fair member and am in charge of the auto show hosted by that group. I also enjoy genealogy and have been researching my family's roots for years.

I'm passionate about helping other veterans and over the years have transported veterans to various VA locations. In April 2022 I had the honor of being selected for the **Veterans Honor Flight** to Washington for the weekend to visit our national memorials.

Telecommunications and the ITPA have been a part of my life for many years now and I have many fond memories of serving the community with other Pioneers.

I also have fond memories of our yearly Down East Club meetings at the Bryant Pond Museum. We always had a large turn out and enjoyed great entertainment. With thanks to Suzanne Reed and other members' hard work, we also hosted annual golf tournaments and raised money through auctions at our TANE conventions. Our band of Pioneers isn't as large as it once was. Our club size has declined over the years and we're down to about a dozen members.



Above: Fern (right) congratulates Earle Hildreth for exemplary service to the ITPA.

Below: Fern explains a telephony display to children who attended the State of Maine Museum. The Down East Club provided the telephony items on display.



Right:

A (much) younger Fern and a replica of a much older phone!





Member Spotlight (Cont'd)

Wil: I began my independent telephone industry career right out of college upon graduation from the University of Maine in June 1960. I was employed by the Twombly family, who owned and operated two independent telephone companies in Maine, Standish Telephone Company and China Telephone Company. They also owned Telephone Service Company, which was a telephone construction company. I was hired to eventually assume accounting responsibilities for all three companies, which I did for fifteen years.

I then left the telephone industry to become a CPA. I was employed by the CPA firm Berry, Dunn, McNeil and Parker (currently Berry Dunn) in Portland Maine for 20 years and I was a partner in that firm for the last 10 years of my employment there. While at Berry Dunn, I was integrally involved in acquiring independent telephone companies in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont as clients for which the firm provided audit, tax, and consulting services. This allowed me to stay closely associated with the independent telephone industry for the remainder of my career.

When I retired from the CPA firm, I re-entered the telephone industry by joining Unitel, Inc. in Unity, Maine. I was hired as the CFO, and I continued in that role until my final retirement in 2009.

"I met my bride, Lucille, in high school, and we were married after my junior year of college in June 1959. We have three children, six grandchildren, and five great grandchildren. Lucille and I celebrated 64 years of marriage in June 2023. She passed away in September 2023.



Above: Lucille and Wil. Both joined the Down East Club in the early 1980s. Wil has served as treasurer of the Down East Club for many years and still serves in that role today. Lucille served as the club's secretary until her passing in Sept. 2023.

For many years, I was heavily involved with the Club's annual golf tournament fundraiser, the Down East Classic. Both telephone workers and vendors enjoyed those exciting events, and the resulting funds were donated to various non-profit organizations across Maine and New Hampshire. Two of the recipients of those donations were the Telephone Museum in Ellsworth, Maine, and the New England ITPA scholarship fund, which offers scholarships to children of independent telephone employees. I got immense satisfaction from having a successful tournament every year and from mingling with all the participants. The tournament was paused during the COVID pandemic and hasn't yet resumed.



Above: Wil reminisced about the years he and Fern worked together during their club's annual golf tournament /fund-raiser.

Below: Wil (right) with Fern Letellier during one of their club's many annual golf tournaments.



During my years in the telco industry, I was also involved with the Telephone Association of Maine (TAM) and the Telephone Association of New England (TANE). I worked on the accounting committees for both organizations, and I was inducted into the TANE Hall of Fame, an achievement of which I am proud of and honored.

Member Spotlight (Cont'd)

Call Your Mother...

Communication and Community in Bryant Pond

APRIL 8 THROUGH MAY 28, 2006

MAINE STATE MUSEUM ✦ AUGUSTA, MAINE

Call Your Mother... The Bryant Pond Telephone Company Collection is a display featuring the switchboards of the Bryant Pond Telephone Company, the last hand-crank telephone system in the United States. The two switchboards of the Bryant Pond Telephone Company had been centered in Elden and Barbara Hathaway's living room for nearly thirty-two years and the telephone office had become the communications center for the town. The exhibit will discuss how the hand-crank telephone system worked, and examine its role in community life. Also to be featured in the exhibit will be a crank phone booth, some lineman's tools and memorabilia from the *Don't Yank the Crank* campaign.



SATURDAY, APRIL 8, 2006

OPENING DAY EVENT

Free Admission All Day of the Event!

10:00 AM TO 3:00 PM

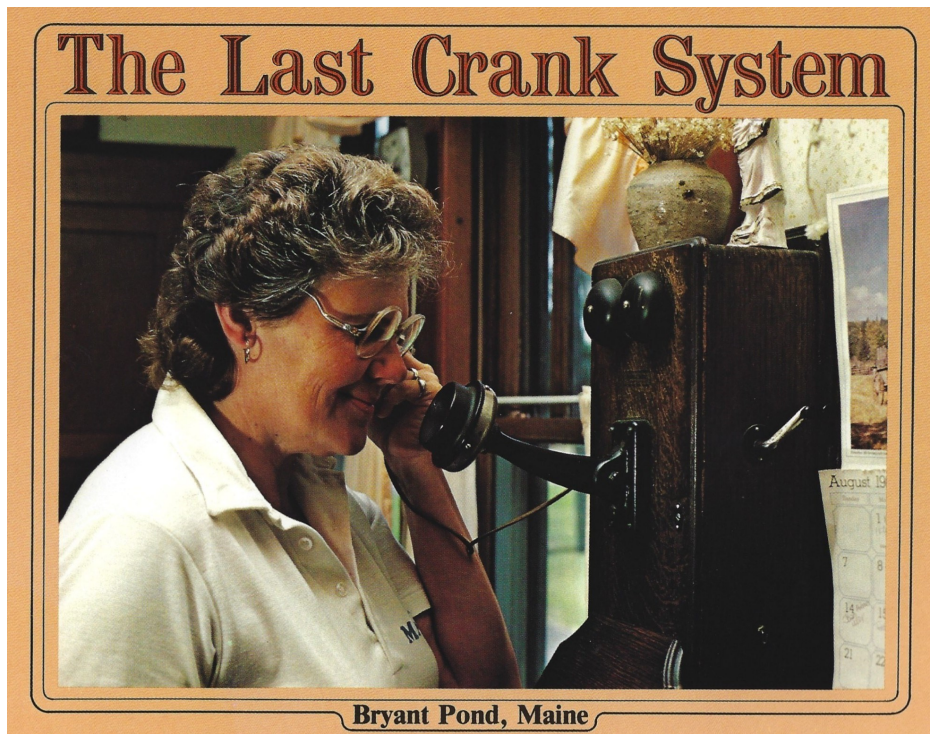
- ◆ *Remember When* - Join Erica Reisburg for an oral history experience.
Maine Folklife Center, University of Maine at Orono
10:00 AM TO 2:00 PM
- ◆ *Opening Remarks* - Curator Laurie LaBar and a representative of the Oxford Networks.
10:30 AM
- ◆ *A Telephone Company in My Living Room* - Susan Glines talks about growing up in the Hathaway household and the Bryant Pond Telephone Company.
2:30 PM
- ◆ *Exhibit, Photographs and Interactive Displays in the Atrium* - from the Telephone Association of Maine; the Telephone Museum, Ellsworth, Maine; the Down East Pioneer Club; and Oxford Networks, Lewiston, Maine
10:00 AM TO 3:00 PM



The Maine State Museum is open Monday through Friday 9 am to 5 pm, Saturday 10 am to 4 pm and Sundays 1 pm to 4 pm. Closed Holidays. For more information, please call 207-287-2301 or check www.mainestatemuseum.org

*Above: Memories Fern and Wil shared about their club's past museum telephone exhibits and events.
Next page: Memorabilia from Fern's company cutover of the last magneto telephone system.*

Member Spotlight (Cont'd)



CUTOVER

The term “cutover” is common among “telephone” people. It refers to the change (sometimes quite abruptly) from one technical method of doing something to another. Older systems are sometimes cut out of use by snipping wires with splicers scissors, cables with cable cutters or cutting power to the old switching system. Newer systems are sometimes put into service by pulling insulated shims from cable mainframes or turning on power to the new system.

Cutovers occur quite frequently with little or no noticeable change to the telephone subscriber. For instance, cutover from one dial switching type of equipment to another or cutover of toll trunks from land-lines to radio.

Retiring a local-operator switchboard to a mechanized dial system was usually such a dramatic change for the subscriber as well as the telephone company that a cutover celebration usually ensued after a successful “cut.” Cutover parties among employers and guests, were common during the 1930 to 1960 period when most of the existing dial systems were converted from local switchboard operation.

The manufacturer of the newer equipment would sometimes provide sandwiches and liquid refreshments. Sometimes employees who worked the hardest during the previous months of equipment installation and testing or those

who most doubted that the new equipment would work properly, celebrated into the early hours of the next day. Cutovers are, of course, usually scheduled for off-peak telephone traffic hours.

*You are cordially invited to
attend the cut-over celebration
of the last magneto telephone system*



*October 11, 1983
2 o'clock pm
Rumford Avenue
Bryant Pond, Maine*

At 2:00 p.m. on October 11th, with more than 200 guests attending, a last hand-cranked call was made by Oxford County Tel. & Tel. Co. manager Bob Jamison to his cable plant engineer, Correy Snowden. Snowden was recuperating from surgery in a Portland hospital.

At 2:12, Jamison and equipment engineer, Art Fisher, “pulled” carbons on the main-frame. The magneto switchboard was formally retired.



Did you know...

Do you ever wonder how the general public finds out about our ITPA Telephone Museum? One way is through community service television commercials aired by WSAV-TV, a local television station that publicizes our museum and other local attractions to the local community at no cost to us.



Alissa Moss, former ITPA Executive Director, is featured in one of the regularly aired commercials. She occasionally gets stopped by residents in the Hinesville area who have recognized her on television. Some of the folks who have asked Alissa if she's the lady from the commercial are pleased to have met a local celebrity, and those encounters have provided Alissa with an opportunity to invite folks personally to the museum. If you haven't seen that commercial, you can view it at:

<https://youtu.be/b96ZiShhmLU?si=ImrTrRkQgDqjTFvg>

The following community service commercial also airs occasionally:

<https://youtube.com/shorts/fSH6zHmDyVs?si=Tpqz19OEz4slWmTT>

Our ITPA National Office and Museum also participates in local community events along with other area attractions, such as Super Museum Sunday which brought in 93 visitors in a single day! ITPA Executive Director Andrea Wick and volunteer Bob Hertling gave tours throughout the day to the many visitors and distributed Valentine goodies to the children who visited. (Read more about that event in the [February Pioneer Connection](#).)

The ITPA website (www.nationalitpa.com) also features information about the museum (see [National Office & Museum - ITPA \(nationalitpa.com\)](#))

We've always heard that "word of mouth" advertising is the best kind of publicity, and plenty of our first time visitors come because someone else told them about the museum.

Recently, the owner of Equity Pay Telephone Company, Inc., Rob Furlong, visited the museum for the first time with his son. Not only did Andrea provide an excellent tour of the museum, but she introduced them to the ITPA itself, and Mr. Furlong made a donation.



During his visit, Mr. Furlong shared information with Andrea about the pay telephone industry and they introduced him to the many landline exhibits in the museum. Andrea said of the visit, "It was a very interesting tour on both sides, and Mr. Furlong plans to visit again with more family members!"

We appreciate Andrea for being a supportive ambassador for our ITPA and the Telephone Museum. We can all help spread the word about our ITPA and invite others to visit our museum and become a Pioneer! There are several membership categories under which an individual can become a Pioneer.



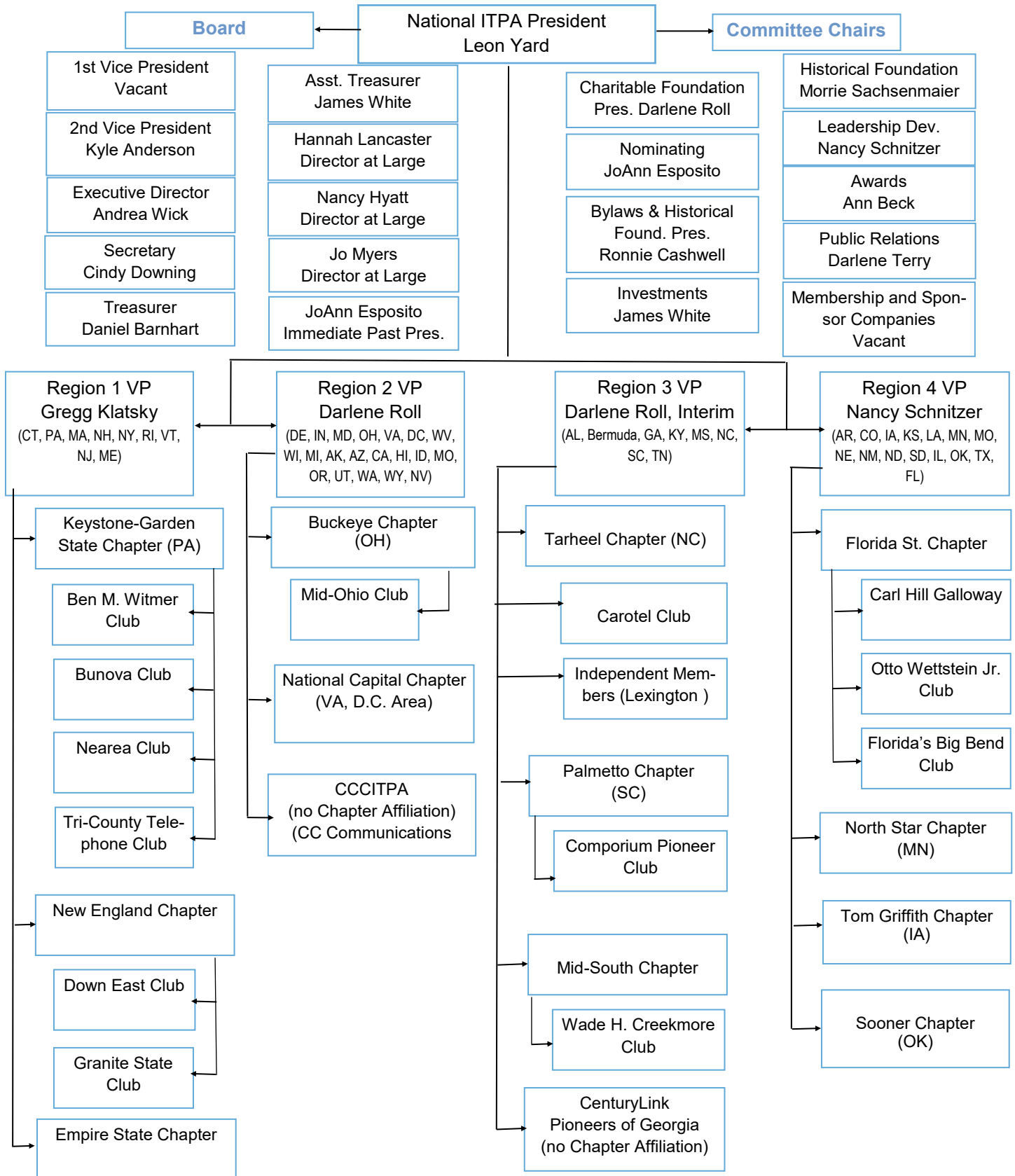
Under the ITPA's "Friends of Pioneers" membership classification, prospective Pioneers may join the ITPA without having any direct affiliation with the telecommunications industry, as long as an existing Pioneer in good standing with the ITPA sponsors them. This membership classification provides a great opportunity for Pioneers to invite friends and family who share our desire to serve our communities. Imagine how much stronger our band of Pioneers will be if each of us invites at least one person to join us!

Prospective Pioneers can apply for membership by completing the membership application found at:

[APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP \(NATIONALITPA.COM\)](#).

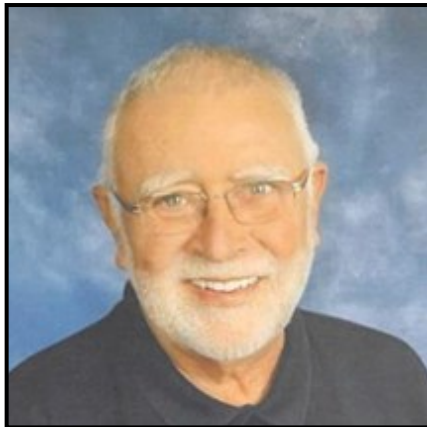


ITPA AT A GLANCE





In Memoriam



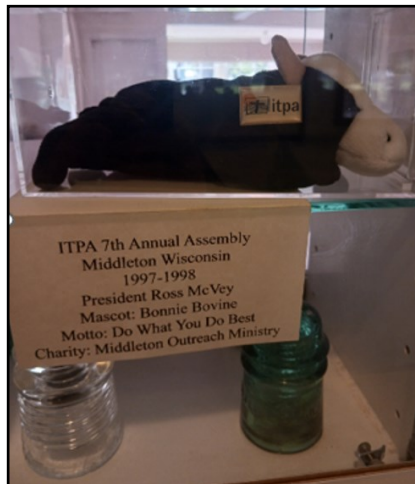
Ross James McVey, 81, of Overland Park, Kansas passed away peacefully at Kansas City Hospice House on April 17, 2024. Ross was born in Wilmington, Delaware on April 4, 1943 to E. Ross McVey and Catherine Henry McVey, who preceded him in death. He spent his childhood in Falling Waters, West Virginia. Ross attended St. Charles College, a preparatory seminary for the priesthood, in Baltimore, Maryland until 1962 when he transferred to West Virginia University. There he met his wife, Vicki Sue Thomas, whom he married on June 26, 1965. Ross and Vicki relocated to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where Ross worked for Arthur Anderson & Co. They had two children, Victoria Susan McVey Conley (1966) and Ross James Jr. (1967). In 1969 Ross received his CPA and the family moved to Kansas City where he was employed by United Telecom. In 1987, the Ross and Vicki moved to Middleton, Wisconsin where he worked for Telephone and Data Systems until he retired in 2001. They moved back to Kansas in 2013, settling in Overland Park.

Ross served as ITPA National President in 1997-1998. His assembly was a memorable one, as he planned a murder mystery dinner as the evening entertainment. Everyone in attendance was in character. His mascot, Bonnie Bovine is on display at the ITPA National Office and Museum.

Ross McVey was also honored in 2009 as an ITPA Director Emeritus. In addition to his contributions to the ITPA, Ross was a proud member of the Knights of Columbus and the Ancient Order of Hibernians. He loved his family, fishing, reading, traveling, and God.

Ross' character and sense of right and wrong was developed at a young age. One of his classmates, Mike Lardner, said of Ross, "When we were in about our second year of high school, I was trying to umpire at first base. Ross was up at bat and I called him safe at first base. He turned and looked at me and said, "I wasn't safe, you need to learn how to umpire." He wouldn't stay on first and went to the bench. I am sure that the integrity he learned from his parents and in the minor seminary stayed with him for life."

Ross is survived by his wife Vicki Sue Thomas McVey, daughter Victoria McVey Conley (Bill), son Ross James McVey Jr. (Donna), and grandchildren: Johnathon Bliss (Danielle), Jordan Bliss (Tony), Ross Thomas McVey (Lexi), Benton Belzer (Anna), Caitlyn McVey, Rayna Belzer, Sarah Conley, Fred McVey and Holden McVey.



Display at the ITPA National Office and Museum commemorates Ross's tenure as ITPA National President

Save the Dates

To have your club/chapter events published in the May Pioneer Connection, please e-mail details of your event to [dterry625@gmail.com](mailto:chtery625@gmail.com).

August 23-25, 2024

Tar Heel Chapter Annual Meeting Hampton Inn in Aberdeen, NC
All Pioneers Welcome

October 11-12, 2024

Carotel Club Annual Fall Convention (Paris—A Weekend to Remember) at The Inn at Pine Knoll Shores, Pine Knoll Shores, NC
All Pioneers Welcome

October 20-22, 2024

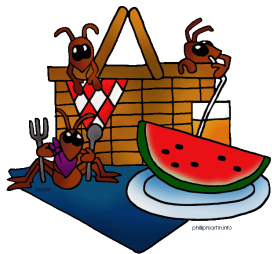
Buckeye State Chapter Ohio Fall Get Together at the Dutch Host Inn, Sugarcreek, OH (home of the world's largest cuckoo clock). Call 330-852-4516 to make reservations (ask for ITPA Buckeye Chapter rate).

December 12, 2024

Otto Wettstein, Jr. Pioneer Club Retiree Christmas Luncheon at Venetian Gardens, Leesburg, FL
All retirees welcome.
Contact JoAnn Esposito at espo-girl56@yahoo.com for information.

Last Wed. of Every Month—NEAREA Telecom Pioneers gather for breakfast (Dutch treat) from 8:30 am-10 am at Lakeside Skillet, Harvey's Lake, PA. Come for breakfast or just to visit.

RECIPE EXCHANGE



Our recipes this month pay tribute to Mayberry, which was the theme for the ITPA's 32nd annual spring assembly. The next issue of our Pioneer Connection will be published in August, when we'll be enjoying summer picnics with family and friends. Whether in our own back yards or on vacation, most of us have go-to recipes that must be present for our summer picnics to be complete. Please help us make the August "**Pioneer Picnicking**" recipes complete by sending your favorite picnic recipe(s) to dterry625@gmail.com by **July 15** (with a photo if available).

Thelma Lou's Cashew Fudge

(Pioneers enjoyed this recipe, courtesy of Melinda Niday, in the hospitality room during the spring assembly, and several people asked for the recipe.)

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup butter
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1 and 3/4 cups sifted powdered sugar
- 1 cup cashews

Directions:

Grease a 9-inch square pan. In sauce pan, melt butter and add brown sugar. Cook over low heat for 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Add milk and continue to cook and stir until mixture boils. Remove from heat and allow to cool. Gradually add powdered sugar until mixture is fudgy. Add nuts. Spread in prepared pan.



Aunt Bee's Hamburger Pie

Ingredients:

- 1 pound hamburger
- 2 teaspoons instant minced onion
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup ketchup
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
- Dash of pepper
- 4 slices crumbled bread
- 2 teaspoons parsley
- 1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese, divided

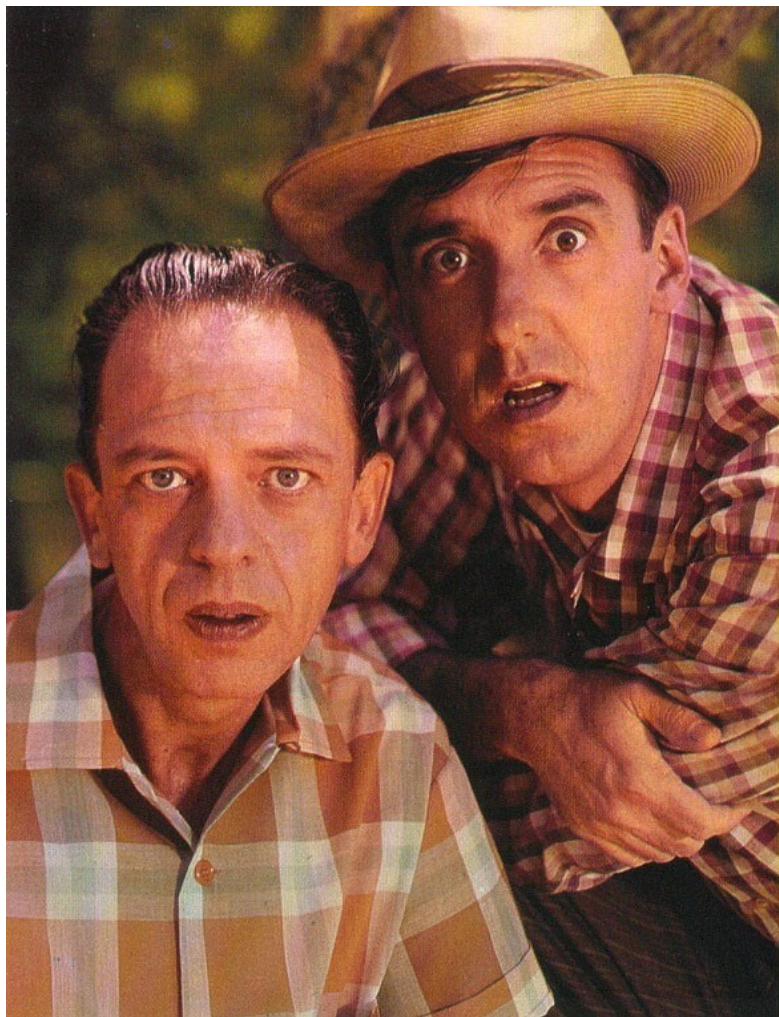
Directions:

Brown hamburger well and drain. Add everything else except half the cheese and the crust. Put hamburger mixture in crust. Top with remaining cheese. Bake at 350 for about 40 minutes.

Serves 6

RECIPE EXCHANGE Cont'd

Submitted by Judy Satterwhite, Carotel Club



Gomer's Banana Bread Pyle

1 cup butter or oil
2 cups sugar
4 eggs, beaten well
6 to 7 bananas, mashed
2½ cups sifted all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons baking soda
½ cup chopped macadamia nuts

Grease 2 large loaf pans or 5 small ones. Cream the butter with the sugar. Add the eggs and beat well. Add the mashed bananas, stirring to blend. In a separate bowl sift together the dry ingredients. Fold the dry ingredients into the batter, mixing well. Add the macadamia nuts. Pour the batter into the pans. Bake in a 350° oven for 50 to 60 minutes, or until done.

For muffins, fill 12 muffin cups ¾ full and bake in a 350° oven for 35 to 45 minutes.

Makes 2 large loaves, 5 small loaves, or 12 large muffins.

—Jim Nabors (*Gomer Pyle*)

Ham and Red Eye Gravy

From Aunt Bee's Cookbook.

Find more of Aunt Bee's recipes at [The Andy Griffith Show - Interactive Aunt Bee's Cookbook \(tagsrwc.com\)](http://TheAndyGriffithShow.com)

Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp. margarine
- 1 slice of center cut ham
- 2 Tbsp. strong, black coffee
- ¼ cup of water

Directions: Melt margarine in skillet and fry ham until done. Remove ham to a platter and keep warm. Add coffee and water to the fat, bring to a boil. Serve gravy with the ham and grits and home-made biscuits. For a large slice of ham or two slices, double amount of liquid. Serves 2-4

Laughter is the Best Medicine



Thanks to Pioneer Donald Phillips of Santa Rosa, California (member of the National Club) for sending a laugh when he mailed his membership dues to our national office. These terrible funny jokes prompted a string of corny one-liners in that we're sharing with you,

and we're asking you to return the favor.

Please send your best or your corniest or even your worst jokes for our August Pioneer Connection. Here's what we've got....can you beat these?

Two guys walk into a bar - The third guy ducks! *Donald Phillips*

Why did Frosty ask for a divorce? – His wife was a total flake! *Donald Phillips*

What is a pretzel's favorite dance? – The Twist! *Donald Phillips*

I threw my phone from the roof the other day and it broke. The airplane mode must have been switched off. *Darlene Terry*

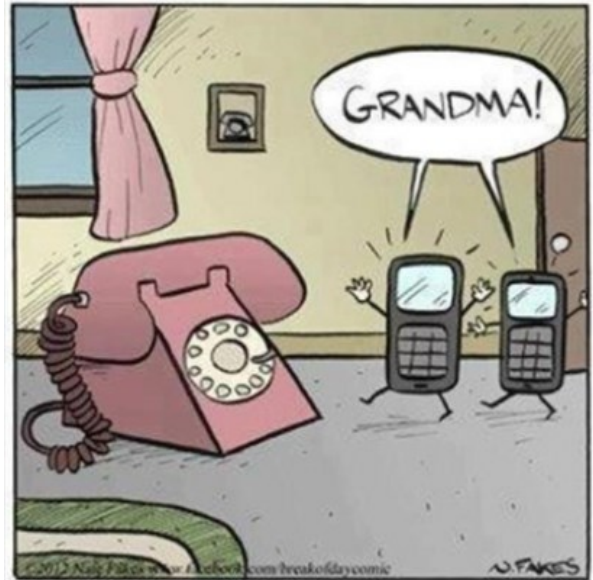
When doesn't a telephone work underwater? – When it's wringing wet! *Daniel Barnhardt*

What do you call a large person who constantly calls people, pretending to be somebody else? – A big phone-y! *Daniel Barnhardt*

What kind of phone did Adam and Eve have? – An Apple. *Cindy Downing*

What do you get if you cross an iron and a phone? – A smooth operator. *Cindy Downing*

Help us keep the laughter going! Send your best (or your worst) one-liner for our August Pioneer Connection to: dterry625@gmail.com.



How many telemarketers does it take to change a light bulb?

Only one, but he has to do it while you are eating dinner.



Laughter is the Best Medicine (Cont'd)



Q: Why do people still have landlines?

A: To find their cell phones when they go missing!

After years of refusing to own a cell phone, the man's wife bought him one and gave instructions to review all of the features. An hour later he walked through the kitchen into the yard and minutes later came back in with the cell phone. The screen was cracked and broken. The wife screamed, "What did you do? That was a \$300 phone!" The husband roared back, "well you paid too much. The airplane mode clearly doesn't work!" "What do you mean, it doesn't work," said the wife. "Well," he said, "I turned it on airplane mode and tossed it from the upstairs window, and it fell straight to the ground. You coulda bought a cheap drone that would work better than this ridiculous thing!"

