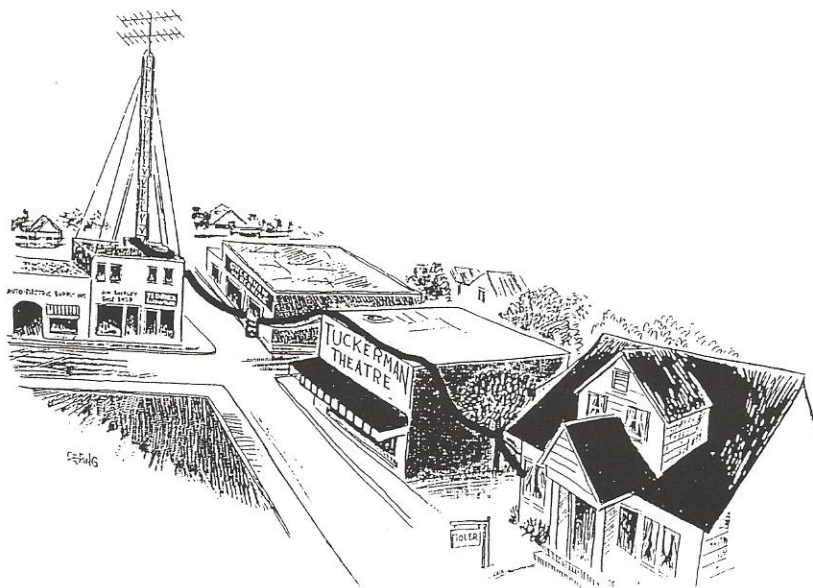


**50TH
ANNIVERSARY**



**JAMES Y. "JIMMY" DAVIDSON
CABLE TELEVISION PIONEER**



**CONNECTED FIRST CABLE
SUBSCRIBER IN OCTOBER, 1948**

Written and published by
James Yates Davidson

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by
James Y. Davidson

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PRINTED BY
K-D GRAPHICS
LONOKE, AR.

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Written, composed and published
by
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Camera copy by J. Y. (Jimmy) Davidson

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and
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Photographs from the
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Assistants to author, Janet M. Davidson
and
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Collaboration: Naomi Toler, Louis French & Ruth Russell

FIRST PRINTING - 1998

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JAMES YATES DAVIDSON

CABLE TELEVISION PIONEER

Connected his first subscriber in October, 1948

*To REX
FROM JIMMY & JANET
BEST WISHES!*

10-17-98

- PREFACE -

By

J. Y. (Jimmy) Davidson

This book will make its debut on Saturday, October 17, 1998 at a party given by my wife, Janet Marie, to honor the 50th anniversary of my first cable subscriber. It is a story that needs to be told, since it documents a number of firsts including Arkansas' first cable television subscriber, most certainly one of the first cable subscribers in the world. It also details Arkansas' first cable television system as well as the first television station that was reliably received in Arkansas. I am fortunate to be credited with a number of other firsts in the early development of cable television, and these are also documented in this book.

I make it absolutely clear that I do not claim to have connected the first subscriber in the country - just one of the first. I positively do not want to take away from others who pioneered the cable industry. There were a handfull of others who connected subscribers in 1948 and it is not known who was the first.

Other primary purposes of this book are to honor the Carl Toler family who were my first subscribers, to give a condensed autobiography and to review the transition of Community Antenna Systems to Cable Television Systems.

This book is a compilation of some of my writings and photos from my vast collection that I accumulated during my years in the cable television industry beginning in 1948. I emphasize that this is just a small sampling from my cable memorabilia and it is my intent to continue selecting some of my writings and photos for future publications.

The writings and photos in this book are not necessarily in chronological order and were selected more or less at random in an attempt to please the reader and give an overview of the highlights of my work in both radio and television.

This book begins with writings by my son, James E. Davidson, and by my wife, Janet Marie Davidson, in which they give a brief personal overview of my life. Please note the dates on their writings.

At the request of Mr. Marlowe Froke, President of the National Cable Television Center & Museum at the University of Denver in Denver, Colorado, I am printing this and other books and albums which detail my autobiography and cable television activities. Copies of all my cable and biographical books and albums are a permanent part of the museum archives. This book and other autobiographical materials are also in the Old Independence Regional Museum in Batesville, Arkansas. I have many other rare photos and many true stories to tell and am working hard to get them all on paper.

I lovingly dedicate this album to my wife, Janet Marie Davidson, and to our able assistant, Diann Lawrence Poore. I am grateful for their help in bringing this book to fruition.

I am also grateful to Mrs. Carl Toler, her daughter, Ruth Russell, and to Louis French for their collaboration for this book. Louis French assisted me in constructing the tower and installing the coaxial cable to the Toler home in 1948. Louis also worked with me in my early cable television experiments and television signal testing in the Batesville, Arkansas area.

MY FATHER

JAMES YATES DAVIDSON

BY

By James E. "Jamie" Davidson

My father, James Yates Davidson was born January 2, 1922 in Little Rock, Arkansas. Dad is a self educated man who, orphaned at the age of eight, was denied the advantage of a high school education. Nevertheless, he has worked in a variety of trades and has excelled in every pursuit. To name a few: electronics expert, photographer, commercial artist, writer and publisher, theater manager and appliance dealer. Following his semi-retirement in the 1970's he became a successful designer, manufacturer and wholesaler of jewelry and gemstones.

The pinnacle of his career, however, was as a pioneer in and developer of the cable television industry. He built his first small, experimental cable TV system in Tuckerman, Arkansas where he connected his first paying subscriber in October, 1948. His Tuckerman project and his Batesville, Arkansas cable systems could be defined as among the first in the world.

Early in World War II, he was supervisor of a Signal Corps Section, where he was in charge of maintenance of aircraft radio and electronics equipment for 16 months. Upon leaving this duty he received a citation from the commanding officer which declared that "during Davidson's operation of the base Signal Corps, no aircraft was grounded due to radio failure." He also received a letter from the 8th Air Service Command commending him for an earphone part which he designed and manufactured.

Immediately following his Signal Corps duty, Dad joined the United States Navy where he served for two years, until the end of World War II. During this two year period, the Navy kept him in southern California, where his talents as a photographer, artist, electronics expert and in the theatre business were utilized. He was on the staff of a Navy newspaper, doing photography and writing.

Following his honorable discharge in February, 1946, he immediately became a licensed aircraft pilot with commercial, instrument and multi-engine ratings. He later became a licensed Coast Guard captain, having designed and supervised the building of a 70' ocean-class motor yacht. Dad has been active in civic affairs and civic clubs, is a Shriner and a 32° Mason. He participated in the organization of both national cable television associations and a number of state and regional cable television associations.

This book is one of several he is producing and publishing, including a comprehensive autobiography. The autobiography is being done at the request of the National Cable Television Center and Museum at the University of Denver in Denver, Colorado who have requested copies of all of dad's writings to become a permanent part of the museum archives.

FROM "OUR HERITAGE"
WRITTEN BY J. E. DAVIDSON

**MY HUSBAND
J. Y. "JIMMY" DAVIDSON**

**by
Janet Marie Davidson**

- o -

**Written aboard the motoryacht,
"JANET MARIE II"
in the year, 1984**

Depending on what part of the country we may be in at the time, my husband answers to several names. Take your choice of "Jim", "Jimmy", "J. Y." or "James." I like "Jimmy" best. Finding each other was the beginning of a wonderful relationship that has stood the test of time, and we continue to share and enjoy all our experiences together with love, dedication and happiness. We would have to reach 150 years of age in order to complete all the plans we have for the future! We talk a lot privately, and over the years I have learned so much about Jimmy that I feel we grew up together. We have many boxes of letters, photographs, newspaper clippings and other material that Jimmy has saved. From time to time we go through some of these boxes and plan for his eventual autobiography. So, I feel well qualified to tell much about him.

Jimmy is retired from a variety of successful professional pursuits. He holds both FAA Commercial Aircraft Pilot's license and Coast Guard Captain's license. Jimmy and I presently live aboard our triple-screw ocean-class motoryacht which we designed and built. This is the third yacht that we have enjoyed over the years, and as I write this, we are on the Gulf of Mexico.

The untimely death of his parents, concurrent with the loss of their assets during the great depression, occurred when he was only eight years old. Following these tragedies Jimmy and his two younger sisters lived with their grandmother for nearly five years on \$20.00 a month. Jimmy recalls wearing the same pair of shoes for five years. His grandmother showed him how to cut cardboard to fit over the holes in his shoe soles. It was during this time that he learned much from their grandmother who was bedfast much of the time until her death. He tells me of the many hours he spent at her bedside listening to her words of wisdom about many subjects including social philosophies and moral standards. "She was a very wise, religious, resourceful and practical lady," states Jimmy, "and I still frequently quote her and give her credit for my having a sense of values unfortunately lacking in many of today's children." "She was a great and lasting influence on my life which has helped me through the hard times."

Self-educated because of these unfortunate circumstances, Jimmy's formal education consists of intermittent and incomplete grammar school. Following age twelve, he was often holding down several man-size jobs at a time.

In his early teens he worked in an interesting place, living with the owner and his family. It was a combination grocery store, meat market, restaurant and bus station! Though there a relatively short time, Jimmy says he gained valuable experience at this establishment.

Jimmy is a "workaholic" who requires little sleep. For a two year period beginning at age 14 he worked at a gas station where he fixed flats, washed and greased cars, and even kept the books, just for room and board. He picked up spending money by repairing radios, juke boxes and bicycles, and by painting signs. During this period he was often called upon as relief projectionist at the local theatre. By age 17 he became a theatre manager, but continued repairing radios, painting and doing commercial photography in his spare time.

During World War II Jimmy served 16 months as department supervisor in the Signal Corps, maintaining aircraft radio and navigation equipment, followed by 2 years in the United States Navy.

Following World War II, he became involved in home appliance and automotive parts stores, also doing some welding and machine shop work. During this postwar era, he also continued painting & photography. He had an early stint in show business, played in a dance band, worked in several Warner brothers movies and even had his own radio show.

Between several attempts at retirement he successfully mastered the design and manufacturing of fine jewelry and became respected in this field as well as gemology and appraisals. As if this were not enough to fill the life span of an average person, Jimmy was an early pioneer in cable television and became widely known for his developments and work within the cable TV industry and trade associations.

Jimmy bores easily without a challenge and always seems to have a new project in progress. At the time of his first retirement he turned his television cable systems and electronics firm over to his son, James E. "Jamie" Davidson, who had grown up in his dad's businesses. Jamie continued operation and expansion of the businesses until his recent retirement to pursue other interests. The initial challenge of Cable TV had diminished from the days of pioneering and his son's ability to take the helm relieved Jimmy to travel and pursue other interests. Jimmy and I both like to travel and explore.

We divide our time between three modes of personal transportation: (1) yachting, (2) motorhoming and (3) flying in our twin-engine airplane. As this is being written we are in the well equipped office of our large ocean-class motoryacht. We have no crew and we share piloting and navigation duties regardless of whether we are on the highways, in the air or on the sea. I do the housework and Jimmy does the maintenance. This keeps us reasonably busy, but we still have time to diversify and keep our lives interesting. Friends say we're so compatible it's disgusting! We stay fairly loose and there's never a dull moment in our lives. Jimmy has always done a bit of writing and excels at photography. His works have been primarily published in trade magazines and his two books about the infamous Hurricane Camille were a popular sell-out and are now collector's items.

Our yacht, "The Janet Marie II," is well equipped and its office is complete with word processor and copy machine. We have many potential plans for the future but keep an open mind and stay flexible. So, at this time, we don't know exactly what the future holds for us but with Jimmy's seemingly insatiable energy and abilities I know we will continue to enjoy interesting and diverse lives together.

DAVIDSON COMPANIES

J. Y. & J. E. Davidson:

**DAVCO ELCTRONICS CORPORATION
COMMUNITY ANTENNA COMPANY, INC.**

NEWPORT TV CABLE, INC.

POCAHONTAS TV CABLE, INC.

**SOUTHERN VIDEO CORPORATION
CABLE SERVICES, INCORPORATED**

DAVCO RECREATIONAL VEHICLES

J. YATES, INCORPORATED,

DAVCO WHOLESALE JEWELRY

ABBA TV, INCORPORATED

UNITED CABLE TV, INC.

CONSOLIDATED CABLE TV, INC.

BALD KNOB CABLE TV, INC.

FRANCHISES:

Batesville, Arkansas

Southside, Arkansas

Cave City, Arkansas

Sharp County, Arkansas

Guion, Arkansas

Independence Co., Arkansas

Newport, Arkansas

Tuckerman, Arkansas

Diaz, Arkansas

Campbell Station, Arkansas

Swifton, Arkansas

Grubbs, Arkansas

Jackson County, Arkansas

Pocahontas, Arkansas

Randolph Co., Arkansas

Helena, Arkansas

West Helena, Arkansas

Phillips County, Arkansas

McGehee, Arkansas

Lake Village, Arkansas

Desha County, Arkansas

Dermott, Arkansas

Dumas, Arkansas

Chicot County, Arkansas

Weiner, Arkansas

Poinsett Co., Arkansas

McCrory, Arkansas

Patterson, Arkansas

Woodruff Co., Arkansas

Bald Knob, Arkansas

Huntingdon, TN Cable, Inc.

PERSONAL HISTORY OF JAMES (JIMMY) YATES DAVIDSON

FROM AFFLUENCE TO POVERTY AND THE LONG ROAD TO RECOVERY

I was born in Arkansas' capital city of Little Rock, on January 2, 1922. My mother was Alice Naomi Davidson who passed away on May 18, 1929 at age 26 when I was barely 7 years old. My father was Ellie Yates Davidson, who passed away just 11 months later on April 9, 1930 at age 42. This left me at age 8, and two younger sisters, Dorothy, age 4½ and Norma Jeanne, age 1½, now full orphans.

Dad came to Arkansas from his birthplace near Tupelo, Mississippi in 1913. He was a licensed optometrist and master jeweler. He was also an inventor, having 18 patents in the early development of radio, in conjunction with RCA Victor. He was also an accomplished musician, pilot and sportsman. He was a 32° Mason and a Shriner. A few years ago I went through the Masonic archives in Little Rock and made copies of Dad's old records. I am also a 32° Mason and a Shriner and belong to the same lodges as my dad. Last year I received my credentials for having been a Mason for 50 years.

Dad was a good provider and my family enjoyed the comforts of a good life. We had a full-time live-in maid. Dad and Mother were very close and devoted. It was during the depression years that my parents passed away and Dad grieved so much from losing Mother that he neglected his business interests and did things that were totally out of character, losing all of his assets and leaving us three children with our widowed grandmother, Martha Robinson, who was my mother's mother and had always lived with us.

We suddenly found ourselves penniless. Grandmother's only income was a military dependent's check of \$20.00 per month. We could no longer afford to live in Little Rock, so we moved to Cabot, about 22 miles to the north, where Grandmother and Mother grew up on a farm. There were no welfare, social programs or food stamps as exists today, so the four of us were forced to live on this \$20.00 monthly pittance until her death in 1935. After my parent's death in Little Rock we went from indoor plumbing to a two-holer out back and from electricity to kerosene lamps. Instead of indoor water faucets, we drew water from a back porch cistern with a rope and pulley. Of course, we no longer had the luxury of a live-in maid!

Grandmother was a very wise, kind, religious and innovative lady. Having been raised on a farm, she knew how to get by on very little. She taught me many things, including how to build traps to catch rabbits. There were times when, if I didn't catch a rabbit, we went hungry. She showed me how to skin the rabbits and cut them up for cooking. I sold the furs to a local fur dealer who paid me from 5¢ to 15¢ depending on the size and quality of the fur.

One time someone butchered a cow and brought us a roast. We were very excited since it had been a long time since we had enjoyed a beef roast. The roast was laying on the kitchen counter prior to cooking when a hound dog came in through the broken screen door, grabbed the roast and ran out. Grandmother and I chased the dog until we caught it and retrieved the roast, washed it real good, then cooked and ate it. I had to cut cardboard to cover the holes in my shoes because we couldn't afford to get them resoled. We had no Christmas presents, except for two of the five Christmases when a kind local lady brought us gifts. The other three Christmases when we had no gifts were very sad and my little sisters cried.

We lived very close to the Missouri Pacific railroad tracks and trains were coal-fired in those days. In the winter time we used a heater that would burn either wood or coal. Often times the four of us would run out close to the railroad tracks when we heard a train coming and wave at the crew. They would throw chunks of coal off for us. Somewhere I have read that this was a fairly common practice among railroad crews who felt sorry for poor folks like us. Many people were out of work during the depression years and we would often count hundreds of men hanging onto train freight cars headed north where they thought that jobs would be waiting.

Grandmother became terminally ill during this period and I had to drop out of school early in the fourth grade to take care of her and my two little sisters. I spent many hours at her bedside, listening to her words of wisdom. I still quote her to this day, and try to live by the morals and dogma she instilled in me. I never completed a full term in school after she became ill, and was denied a full grade school or high school education. However, I was fortunate to have an insatiable thirst for knowledge. The school teachers were sympathetic and loaned me all the books through the twelfth grade. I finished them all in less than two years. I also checked out of the school library any book I could find on electricity and radios.

I recall when Grandmother's condition was visibly worse and I ran down the railroad tracks to the other side of town where the doctor's office was. I told the doctor that Grandma was worse and pleaded with him to see about her. He refused, telling me that we already owed him money that we could never pay and asked me to go away. I pleaded with the doctor over and over until he threatened me if I didn't leave. I ran back down the tracks as fast as I could and when I got home Grandma was dead. This was on February 19, 1935. We had no money for a casket or for funeral expenses so a kind carpenter made a pine box and someone from Huddleston-Wood Feed Store used their flat-bed truck to haul her to the cemetery.

Following this, my sisters and I got kicked around a lot. We were first sent to relatives in Demopolis, Alabama, people we had never seen. While there we were frequently mistreated, and it seemed that they resented us being forced upon them. I had a newspaper route delivering the Mobile Register and worked at odd jobs, including weaving the bottoms in cane bottom chairs for which I was paid 10¢ per chair. They would not allow us money, taking every penny that I earned. If they felt I had not turned in every penny, I got a beating. They had a daughter the age of my middle sister who was hateful toward us. She would make up things about us to cause us all to be whipped. It was always with a leather shaving strop. Naturally, all three of us were very unhappy there, and after a few months I ran away with bleeding whelps on my back, hitchhiking and riding a freight train until I reached Little Rock. When I left Demopolis, I carried all my belongings in a gunnysack, and had exactly 97¢ in my pocket which was left over from a dollar bill that I found along a roadside. I recall sleeping on the hard floor of a box car one night that was on a railroad siding in Okolona, Mississippi and in the bushes along roadsides.

Another time I awakened across the lap of a very kind black gentleman with a magnificent white beard. We were on his mule. He had picked me up on a dusty road where I had passed out from hunger and exhaustion. He took me to his home and helped me to wash the dust off under a pitcher pump in his yard. He then offered me some food and I asked if I could chop wood or do something to repay him for rescuing me and for the food. He laughed and said that he had some husky boys who did all of his chores but that he had a flashlight that wouldn't work and could I fix it? I fixed it and accepted some food and after resting a bit, continued my journey on to Arkansas.

I caught a freight train for part of my journey and then a truck driver picked me up for the trip on to Memphis, Tennessee. He would take me no farther than Parkway Street at the edge of Memphis, stating that it was his company's policy not to pick up hitchhikers. He told me to stay on Parkway and it would take me to the Mississippi River bridge to Arkansas.

It was a long walk but by early afternoon I had made it to the Ford assembly plant which was surrounded by a chain link fence. Mesmerized by the assembly lines I walked around the fence several times peering in wonderment at the cars being put together. The plant was very close to the Mississippi River and I badly needed a bath. So, I scrambled down the bluff, laid my gunnysack on the bank and swam into the water with a bar of soap I had brought along. Not realizing how strong the current was, I quickly found myself a hundred yards or so down stream. Drying myself off and dressing, I walked the short distance to the bridge that would bring me back to Arkansas.

It was dusky dark when two men picked me up and asked where I was headed. I told them that I was going to visit an uncle in Little Rock. This was years before the present interstate and we traveled on old highway 70 which was the main artery between Memphis and Little Rock. The men stopped to eat at a place named Black Fish Restaurant about 15 or so miles west of Memphis. As usual, I was broke and hungry, but by now had lost some of my pride and devoured two hamburgers the Texans generously bought for me.

The men were Texas ranchers and when they learned that I was an orphan said that they had no children and offered to adopt me to live with them on their ranch. They painted a tempting picture of ranch life with horses, cattle, fishing, etc. They told me about their wives and ranch life and where they were located. I have often wondered what my future would have been had I accepted their offer.

Arriving in Little Rock about midnight I asked them to let me off at the police station at the foot of the Broadway Bridge. Boldly walking into the station I told the night officer who I was and asked him if he knew my dad, E. Y. Davidson, and he got up from his chair and stated that he sure did, commenting about my dad's unfortunate death. He gave me a place to sleep for the rest of the night.

My goal was to look up two of my all-time favorite people, Uncle Sam Gateley, my mother's half brother and his wife, Aunt Lillie Mae who had a brother, Buford Finley, who worked at Cochran Feed Mill in east Little Rock so I asked directions and walked to the mill. Buford made me a map on how to find Uncle Sam and Aunt Lillie Mae who were living on a farm east of Lonoke. I caught a ride part way and walked the rest. All the walking on this trip caused me to continually cut scraps of cardboard for the holes in my shoe soles.

Uncle Sam was one of the kindest, most gentle and generous persons I ever knew. During his lifetime he ranged from poor to modest means and his background was a bit diverse. In addition to farming, he worked for various funeral homes in Little Rock and Lonoke, driving ambulances and directing funerals.

I stayed with Uncle Sam and Aunt Lillie Mae for about a month and they got me a job plowing for a farmer down the road who paid me 25¢ a day. Uncle Sam had no electricity and no radio. While there I hitched-hiked to Little Rock and purchased a Galena crystal, some ear phones and a cat's whisker (a very fine piece of stiff wire) from J. O. Russell who owned Southern Radio Supply. Uncle Sam helped me find some old automobile starter motors from which I unwound the field coils using

the wire to make a coil for the crystal radio I was building and also for the aerial which I ran from their house out to a big oak tree. My crystal set worked real good.

Soon after my military discharge from WW-II, Uncle Sam and Aunt Lillie Mae had electricity on their farm. In 1946 I drove my family there for a visit and took them a brand new table model electric radio. They were still using the crystal set that I had built for them some ten years earlier. Uncle Sam held my son, Jamie now three years old, on his lap and gave him this old crystal set while telling him the story of how it came about.

Uncle Sam was manager of the Bailey Funeral Home in Lonoke, Arkansas when he passed away in June, 1957. I had just flown my airplane to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for a cable television convention when I received the bad news by phone, so I hurried back to the airport and flew back to Arkansas the same day. I called the Worshipful Master of Uncle Sam's Lonoke Masonic Lodge and he arranged for a Masonic funeral.

Two weeks after I left Alabama my sisters ran away. They were chased by the man and his wife we were living with wielding a shotgun. My little sisters took refuge in a nearby neighbor's house where police were called. I was 13 and my sisters were ages 7 and 10. Some nice people paid their train fare and we were quickly reunited back in Arkansas. My sisters were soon placed in a Christian orphanage in Morrilton, Arkansas where they completed high school. I went from place to place, working at whatever was available.

After spending a week or two with each of several distant relatives, I was taken in by Mr. & Mrs. Wade High in Cabot. They owned a place of business that consisted of a combination grocery store, restaurant, meat market and bus station. Large plate lunches were only 25¢. A bowl of homemade chili or stew was 10¢ but we often sold a half bowl for 5¢. This included all the crackers and ketchup the customer could eat. Mr. & Mrs. High treated me well, and it was here that Mr. High taught me all facets of his business. When the fall school term was about to begin, the High's insisted that I enroll. School had always bored me, and I had missed so much during Grandmother's illness that I had completely lost interest in school. I had already studied all school books through the 12th grade and also checked other books out of the library, reading and studying on my own and I felt like going to school would be a waste of time.

To avoid returning to school, I ran away from the High family and joined up with a traveling tent show that went to small towns that had no movie theatre. We showed westerns and "B" movies of that era. They were a very nice family and, in addition to working the projectors, I was a companion to their little boy. I had been with them only a short while when the truant officer picked me up. She said, "This is no way of life for a little boy like you." She said that there was a nice old man and wife who lived on a farm east of Star City, Arkansas and that they wanted to adopt a little boy. She said I would be happy with farm life. She dropped me off at their farm and I watched her drive away on the dusty road, thinking, "I'm not a country farm boy....."

I soon learned that the old couple really wanted a slave. They had me doing all kinds of farm chores like plowing, feeding animals and getting up at 4:00 a.m. to milk cows. The following Saturday after I was left with this couple, the old man hitched up his team and went to town in his wagon. After he left, I queried the

wife about a model "T" Ford that had stopped against a huge oak tree in their front yard. It was a huge yard, perhaps 20 acres or more. She told me that two city slickers came out there in two of the contraptions. They sold one to Paw and went back to town in the other. "Well," she said, "Paw got to going 'round and 'round in the front yard and couldn't get the fool thing stopped. So he finally just rammed it into the tree and it's been there ever since." I asked her if I could try and get it started and drive it some. She agreed, but I never could get it started.

I stayed on the farm exactly two weeks. One night, when I was certain they were asleep, I slipped out of the house, ran and walked on the dusty road to Star City where I slept behind some bushes alongside a road. Early the next morning I caught a ride to England, Arkansas, a town about 25 miles south of Little Rock where my family had lived for about four years. Dad had had a store there, doing optometry, jewelry, watchmaking and radio work. I remembered England well, since I was seven when we moved from there back to Little Rock, following Mother's death.

As I have already stated, I had always been obsessed with radio and electricity, studying any book on the subject that I could obtain. Some years earlier I had managed to scrap together parts for building simple radios. As I walked through the streets of England I had no money and was a bit hungry. I came upon a radio and bicycle repair shop where I paused to look through the window in which radio parts, chassis, speakers, etc., were on display. The owner was out front, leaning back in a cane bottom chair, reading a newspaper. "Interested in radio, son?," he asked. I replied in the affirmative and he dropped his newspaper and asked my name. When I told him my name, he asked if I happened to be the son of E. Y. Davidson. Again, I replied in the affirmative. At that moment he quickly jumped from his chair and hugged me. He said to me, "My name is O. V. Brown and your dad taught me everything I know about radio." When he learned that I was homeless, he told me that he and his wife, Evie, had no children and insisted that I live with them in exchange for work in his radio shop. I stayed with the Browns for less than a year, working in his shop where I increased my knowledge about radio. I also worked on bicycles and was relief projectionist at the local theatre.

I worked very hard for O. V. Brown and gained some good experience. However, he was a bit tight with money and I rarely had any to spend. Also, we were not getting along too well. One time he sent me out in the country in his car to repossess a bicycle because the customers were behind on payments. When I got there and started taking the bicycle the little boy cried and I just couldn't take it away from him. Returning to the shop empty handed, O. V. gave me a bawling out and I quit.

I had become acquainted with another family in England, the L. E. Bentleys, who owned a Magnolia service station. They had also been good friends of my parents when we lived in England years earlier. It was an easy move for me, and I lived with the Bentleys for almost a year, working in their gas station. Washing and greasing cars, fixing flats and pumping gas was hard work, but we got along well and finally I had some spending money. They even allowed me to put in a radio repair shop in an upstairs room. At first, they insisted that I enroll in school. I threatened to run away, telling them that school bored me and that I preferred to continue studying on my own. They allowed me to stay without going to school, and this was one of the happier periods of my life.

L. E. Bentley was a self-made successful man. However, he had practically no formal education and never had a bookkeeping system at his business. When I first started working at his service station he showed me his cash box (which was a small fishing tackle box) and the combination to his large safe. He told me that he had always wanted a cash register and bookkeeping system, but just didn't think he

could learn to use it. He asked me if I could help him. I contacted a local dealer who sold us a National cash register and a set of books. The books were simple, a double entry system with just a journal and general ledger. The Bentleys were happy with my bookkeeping system which I soon became proficient at and I eventually taught them to use it, too.

L. E. knew that I wanted a typewriter. One day he came in grinning with a manual typewriter that he had purchased at a school auction. It had been used for teaching typing classes and the keys were all blank. I learned where all the letters and numbers were through experimenting and to this day I have never gone beyond the "hunt and peck" system. One day, while I was typing, a cap fell off one of the keys and upon examination I found that all the keys had these blank caps on them that could be easily removed! So, I had spent a lot of time learning where all the letters and numbers were when, had I known that these caps were removable, I could have saved a lot time. Despite never learning the "touch system," I am a fairly fast typist and get by.

Though I worked long, hard hours in the gas station, I was allowed time for other pursuits. I built up a respectable sign painting sideline which also provided me with extra money. I was also earning a decent living repairing radios and small appliances. One of my customers was the local juke box operator, who had been a customer when I worked at O. V. Brown's shop. Sometimes when I repaired a juke box, he would give me old 78 rpm records, and I had accumulated a fair record inventory. During my tinkering I put together a simple oscillator and modulator that I could broadcast with. I managed to purchase parts for a turntable, and used a discarded telephone transmitter for my microphone. To switch from voice to music, I used a double-throw, double-pole knife switch, all very crude but it worked. For some time I had an early morning show broadcasting between 4:00 and 5:00 a.m., playing records and talking. My theme song was Cab Calloway's "Wake Up And Live." At age 86, Calloway passed away on June 12, 1986 and he played music right to the end. Believe it or not, I had a few regular listeners who would sometimes phone in requests! Though my mini-broadcast station was illegal, the FCC never intervened.

The Bentleys had a large console radio that they had purchased from my dad back in the 20's. One day it quit and it didn't take me long to find that the driver transformer had become defective. It was a thrill for me to repair a radio that my dad had sold!

Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Duncan had a department store in England and were quite wealthy. They both had cars but Mrs. Duncan could not drive. L. E. let me off every Thursday so I could drive Mrs. Duncan to Little Rock for her weekly grocery shopping at Terry's Gourmet food store. Mrs. Duncan always paid me \$5.00 for each trip. She came from plantation aristocracy in Mississippi and one time I drove her to her sister's estate and farm in Mississippi. It was a huge antebellum home with tall white columns in front. We stayed a couple of nights and my bedroom must have had a 20 foot ceiling with a huge four-poster bed. She turned me over to a real nice older black man whose instructions were to keep me entertained. We rode horses and I drove him to town in Mrs. Duncan's new car.

As I said, this was one of the happier periods of my life, but I had ambition and deep down inside I knew that there must be better things ahead for me. Even when living with Grandmother in the early 30's after my parents died, I dreamed of things I would do when I grew up. Of the many things I learned from my grandmother during this period, I feel that honesty, self esteem, compassion, forgiveness and pride were the most important. Though we were very poor, we lived by these traits.

Recalling my younger days in Cabot in the early 30's, airplanes were a rarity, but when I did hear one it was usually a World War I Jenny biplane. I would look up at it and tell myself, "That pilot is a human being. I am a human being too, so if he can fly it, so can I when I grow up" and I did. Looking ahead to February, 1946 while living in Tuckerman, flying was easy for me because of my past experience in the Signal Corps at an Army air base. I just bought a small airplane and with almost no instruction I started flying. I ultimately passed the written and flight requirements for commercial, multi-engine, and instrument ratings. I flew for 52 years and owned nine airplanes, accumulating about 17,000 hours of flying time.

Also, during my early childhood, I would see a big steamboat on the Arkansas river and tell myself the same thing that I told myself about airplanes, that when I grew up I could be a ship's captain. Where we lived in Cabot there was a ditch that filled with water following a heavy rain. I would put Grandmother's #3 wash tub in the ditch and maneuver with a homemade paddle, fantasizing that I was a ship's captain, sailing to far away exotic ports. After I grew up I had several boats and ocean-class yachts and passed the Coast Guard test for a 100-ton Coast Guard Captains's License.

Years later I did a charter for the Delta Queen Steamboat Company. As a courtesy, the captain allowed me to pilot this huge 1,735 ton vessel. That was quite a thrill!

But that dreaming was when I was a little kid and I was now 16 years old. The Bentleys had assured me that I could stay with them indefinitely, but I was seriously thinking more about my future. Here I was, comfortable and doing quite well, but I still was neither an airplane pilot nor a ship's captain. Early one Saturday morning as I was checking the cash receipts in the gas station, the telephone rang. This call was the major turning point in my life and the beginning of events that led to my cable television career.

The call was from Carl Christian, owner of a 5-theatre chain, all in small Arkansas towns. Mr. Christian was sick in bed when he called saying that he wanted me to come to Des Arc, Arkansas to run the projectors at his theatre there. He said that he was short of projectionists and had been operating the projectors there himself until becoming ill. I was reluctant to make such a sudden decision, but Mr. Christian was convincing. He told me that he was building a very fine new theatre in Tuckerman, Arkansas, about 100 miles to the north, and that he would send me there to be its manager. Wow! I had a serious discussion with the Bentleys and they urged me to accept the opportunity, saying that if it didn't work out I was welcome back anytime. So, taking only a few clothes and necessities, a friend drove me to Des Arc, about 60 miles from England. I never did find out how Mr. Christian learned about me but I sure am glad he did.

The year was 1938, and little did I realize that fate was sending me to Tuckerman where I would hook up my first cable television subscriber just 10 years later!

Following a few weeks at Des Arc, Mr. Christian kept his promise and sent me to Tuckerman to be manager of the town's first theatre. He had furnished me with my own red Ford panel truck and I was ecstatic! I first drove back to England to pick up my personal belongings, my radio gear and paint brushes, and to bid the Bentleys farewell.

Incidentally, I started driving at age 13 or 14. I have no idea how long it was before I obtained a drivers license but it was several years. Times were much simpler back then.

The Tuckerman Theatre was nice, and I remained there until shortly before I married my first wife, Jamie's mother, in July, 1940. While in Tuckerman I also had a radio repair shop and continued doing sign painting. I also started doing a bit of commercial photography and darkroom work. I had moved my radio shop into a building with a new home appliance company and had become a partner in the business. We had no commercial television at this time, but I was doing a brisk business with radio sales and service, still not dreaming that in just 8 years, from this store, I would build a tall tower and a small experimental cable system and connect my first paying subscriber. The country was at peace and I was doing quite well and supporting my marriage.

I well remember December 7, 1941, the day the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor which changed my life and the lives of most everyone world wide. Naturally, I was agonizing over whether to volunteer for military service or just wait until I was drafted. One day two well-dressed men from the War Department came into our store unannounced and informed me that I had been chosen to install and supervise a Signal Corps department at a new Army Air Base which was under construction near Newport, Arkansas. I advised them that I had no experience with military radio equipment, but they had an answer for that, removing a file from their briefcase that contained my life's history! They had already given me a "G-2" clearance which authorized me access to confidential and secret equipment. (This may seem strange now, but after entering the Signal Corps, the word "radar" was classified, and I could only say the word to another person with a G-2 clearance.)

At first I told these two men that I would just wait until I was drafted which, with my draft classification, would be in about a year. They responded by telling me I would be drafted next week if I did not accept their proposition. Some threat, huh? I was curious about how they found me and asked. They told me that they were recruiting 26 men for the same job at 26 other basic training air bases. They would spend several days in each area where they would ask gas station attendants, waitresses in restaurants, business people and others who they would take their radio to if it needed service and they said that my name came up every time.

On November 11, 1942 I was in uniform and on the Signal Corps payroll with my best and most rewarding job to date. I was sent to Tinker Field at Oklahoma City for a "familiarization course" on Signal Corps equipment which was fairly simple at that time. It was a brief five weeks of intense cramming. I returned to Newport and watched the air base being constructed, especially the hanger that was to house my department. The base was quickly completed and I was very busy requisitioning equipment and supplies for my department. Very soon I had a secretary, a stock clerk and four repair trainees. I was also supplied four additional GI trainees. All eight had varying amounts of radio experience, but part of my duties included teaching this class of eight an electronics course.

During my Signal Corps duty, I still lived at Tuckerman, commuting to the air base daily. On evenings and weekends I continued radio repairs at the appliance store.

Airplanes quickly started arriving at the base, and we had an average of 250 aircraft, mostly BT-13s, during my time there. I left with a commendation which stated that no aircraft were ever grounded due to radio failure during my 16 month tenure there, and another citation for having developed an earphone part which was adopted and used widely.

I didn't like the military, especially the caste system and all the regulations. The pilots that trained there had already completed their primary training elsewhere

and they transitioned from much smaller and lower powered airplanes to the larger BT-13s which had more powerful 450 hp Pratt and Whitney engines. These were radial engines which caused more torque than the pilots were accustomed to, sometimes causing accidents. A lot of pilot trainees lost their lives and it especially bothered me when a crash truck would bring in a demolished BT-13 with body parts such as a shoe with a foot in it...They expected me to salvage the radio equipment and sometimes there would be bits of flesh and blood on the radio equipment. This really got to me.

It was during my tenure with the Signal Corps when my son, James E. "Jamie" was born. He arrived on Christmas Eve, 1943.

After leaving the Signal Corps, I immediately joined the United States Navy on February 4, 1944, spending two years at Camp Elliott near San Diego in southern California. My resume' quickly caught up with me and the Navy took advantage of my past experience in show business, photography and electronics, and I was immediately assigned duties in these areas. I expected to be shipped to overseas duty at any moment, but fate kept me in California. I was soon promoted to petty officer but my navy pay check was very small. I lived off-base and earned extra money by working in a radio repair shop and as relief theatre projectionist. I also worked part time in the dark room of a photographic firm in San Diego when time permitted.

During my Navy career I had the opportunity to work with many movie stars who performed in various shows such as the Hollywood Victory Committee, USO Shows and other variety shows. These were done in the 3,012 seat auditorium where I had my office and darkroom. I gained much experience in lighting, audio equipment and all facets of large stage performances. It was a very large theatre, the proscenium arch being more than 100' wide, complete with fly loft, lighting and everything for large performances. While there I made several additions and improvements to the sets, lighting and audio equipment. I also performed in several plays, and was in five featurettes produced by Warner Brothers, sometimes playing in a harmonica trio. My reward for working for Warner Brothers was \$25 per day, which was a lot of money back then. Another reward was people back home seeing me in these films. One Tuckerman friend called me in San Diego after midnight (Pacific time), excited about seeing me in one of the films at a local theater. It was really no big deal, just harmonica playing and some no-line bit parts.

The war ended in August, 1945 and I was discharged on February 11, 1946, much wiser from my Navy experiences. I had just reached my 24th birthday, and since the war's end I had been pondering what I would do with the rest of my life. I had been offered work in Hollywood, but was homesick for Arkansas. Also, I was being hounded by my business partner to return and resume my position at the appliance store.

If I had stayed in California, I would not have hooked up that first cable television subscriber in Tuckerman, Arkansas! Also, I would not have met my sweet wife, Janet Marie. Again, fate wielded its hand over me.

So, back in Tuckerman I put the war years behind me and found myself again repairing radios, selling appliances and still finding a bit of time to pursue photography and sign painting. My partner liked to fish and play golf, hobbies he had missed immensely during my military absence. So, when I returned, I had the store to myself most of the time. I expanded the inventory and hired more people, ultimately having a payroll of 27 employees.

One of the first things I did after returning to Tuckerman was to purchase a small airplane and start flying. I got in a lot of flying time and soon had a private license. I frequently flew on business trips to Little Rock and Memphis and other places. This first airplane was a two-seat Aeronica Champion and with my Signal Corp experience it was a snap for me to just start flying. From March, 1946 to 1998 I have flown continuously for 52 years and accumulated about 17,000 hours.

In Tuckerman I also found time to put a makeshift studio together where I did five daily 30-minute shows each week. It was a home talent show where I auditioned people with musical talent and put together tapes which I sent to the nearest radio station at Jonesboro, some 40 miles distant. There were not that many radio stations before the war, and new construction was halted until after the war. Soon, however, radio stations sprang up in every town and city that could justify one. As I taped these shows, I accompanied some of the acts with either my harmonica or my drums. I did ad lib commercials for our store.

From these auditions I selected several very good musicians and put a band together, playing for dances, for personal appearances in school auditoriums, or just anywhere we could make a buck. It was during this time that I met our good friend, Kern Kennedy, and gave him his first pay as a professional musician. Since then he has played all over the United States and is still playing piano professionally. Kern is truly a gifted and outstanding piano player and is still in great demand. I am very proud of his success and our friendship with he and his wife, Leah.

I was bored and overworked at the appliance store, and was getting nowhere. We had added a machine shop where I did both acetylene and electric welding and other shop work. So, my diversions in the music field and other pursuits helped deal with my boredom. I was secretly watching for an opportunity to better my position in life. It was soon to come!

At this time I had never seen a television picture. In 1947 radio station WMC AM/FM in Memphis, Tennessee started playing around with closed-circuit television, doing a "live" closed-circuit show at the Mid-South Fair for one week, September 22-29. They used two receivers and a camera borrowed from RCA. On October 19, 1947 they applied to the FCC for a television station license on channel 4. They quickly received their permit just over a month later on November 28, 1947. Construction immediately began on their 750' tower, transmitter and studio.

I was very excited and eager about this project, and made many trips to Memphis in my little airplane, following closely the progress on the transmitter, tower and studio construction. I wanted to learn all I could about television and quickly became friends with the chief engineer, E. C. "Pop" Frase, a number of his assistants and also the station manager, Henry "Hank" Slavik whom I had known from back in my show biz days. I eagerly awaited their debut on the air and with the help of my key assistant, Louis French, we had already constructed a 100' tower atop a two story building adjacent to our appliance store. We were ready for their first television transmissions and had installed 17 outlets in our television display, one outlet in the American Legion building and another outlet in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Toler, about a block away.

On May 16, 1948 WMCT did another closed-circuit demonstration at the Memphis Cotton Carnival. This time they used their new mobile unit and had 12 receivers.

In the fall of 1948, WMCT completed their tower and started transmitting test

patterns, one was during a large Admiral appliance dealer's meeting at the Hotel Peabody Ballroom. They continued transmitting intermittent test patterns, along with film and slide presentations. (Video tape had not yet been invented and all movies and news were on film.)

We excitedly received every one of these test patterns, albeit somewhat snowy at times. In today's television environment it's difficult to imagine how we all got so excited about watching that old Indian-head test pattern. But those who happened to be in our store or at the other two hookups were mesmerized. Chief engineer, Pop Frase would phone me every time before broadcasting a test pattern, asking me to phone him back with a report of signal strength and quality. I was already buying television sets for our display and to sell. Incidentally, my first television set was a 7 inch Motorola and the largest one in our present home is 60 inches! I soon started purchasing larger TV sets such as Admiral, Philco, Motorola, Hallicrafters and RCA.

When WMCT started regularly scheduled broadcasting they would transmit the test pattern for two hours each morning, between 10:00 and 12:00 a.m. and each afternoon from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. so people could adjust their television sets. As those who were around back then may recall, television receivers of that era were difficult to adjust, especially with weak signals. The most critical adjustments were the fine tuning and both the vertical and horizontal hold and linearity. These daily test pattern periods were followed by about 3 hours of programming between 6:30 and 10:00 p.m. Inserted in this booklet are copies of early newspaper ads and articles from the first few months of regular broadcasting by this pioneer television station.

People flocked to our store each night to watch the black and white pictures in our store window. Some accused me of trickery, stating, "It's impossible to throw pictures through the air." We soon went to larger sets as they became available, and sold many in Tuckerman and the surrounding area.

Everyone was hungry for television, and these meager pictures from Memphis just whetted our appetites. I wanted to wire the entire town but determined that Tuckerman was too small for a viable community antenna project so I started looking around. (I might add here that I did return and wire the entire town of Tuckerman later, operating it from our new and nearby Newport system.)

Batesville was my next choice, so, beginning in 1949 I started testing for my antenna site there. With Louis French still my number one assistant, I spent as much time as possible planning a system for Batesville. He and I tested on seven different hilltops in the area, using everything from existing communications towers to temporary towers. I also tried a barrage balloon which turned out to be an unwieldy fiasco.

I recall one incident when Louis and I spent all day testing for TV signals on top of a tower using antenna arrays, a small TV set and a field strength meter. It was a communications tower belonging to Arkansas Power and Light Company which I had gained permission to use. Just about dusk we lowered our equipment to the ground and both started climbing down the tower with me being first. I was loading our equipment in the truck and looked around for Louis but he was nowhere to be seen. I yelled for him and he replied from the top of the tower. I looked up and sure enough he was there! I yelled back saying, "I thought you were just behind me as I climbed down." He replied, "I was until you stirred up a nest of wasps and they swarmed on me, so I quickly climbed back to the top of the tower to get away from them." After considerable time the wasps finally settled down and Louis cautiously

climbed to the ground. Neither of us were wearing shirts and I counted 17 wasp stings on Louis' upper torso.

After choosing Ruddle Hill just southwest of the city, I designed and erected what I believe to be the first rhombic antenna that was specifically designed for television frequencies and for a community antenna. (We called our systems "community antenna systems" until up in the 60's when the name was changed to "cable television systems") I spent several weeks calculating the dimensions of the rhombic antenna and laying out the four supporting towers and guy wires. A high-gain antenna such as a rhombic was necessary since a home antenna would not receive television signals 114 miles from the TV station. I knew of the use of rhombic antennae by the military for long range communications, and this was what inspired me to build one for Batesville. It was a massive thing, supported by four steel towers and covered several acres. But it worked, and stayed in use for many years as my system grew. Tests were made to compare four ten-element yagi antennae with my rhombic and the rhombic won!

Incidentally, I leased the land for this huge rhombic antenna array from Robert Kelley in exchange for a free hookup! There are no bargains like this these days! I recently had lunch with an old friend who is an official in one of the largest cellular companies and he told me that they would typically pay \$1,000 per month for a cellular tower site!

It took either guts or stupidity to build a cable system back then when only one channel was available and broadcasting only light schedules. Also, at that time there were no other channels on the horizon that would be within my reach. As my Batesville system grew I had lots of visitors from all over the country who had learned of my project through Associated Press articles. In hindsight I wish I had asked them to sign a visitor's log. Many of them later became cable customers of ours. We started stocking several sizes of coaxial cable, amplifiers and all other equipment and supplies required by cable systems. We even manufactured various passive devices. Our inventory grew and grew and early on we were doing turnkey construction of cable systems for others over a wide area, and also building additional cable systems for ourselves. After a very few years the supply, engineering and construction phase of our business grew to the point where it was necessary to separate these operations from my community antenna systems so I formed DAVCO Electronics Corporation and we called it a "Cable Television Supermarket" in our national advertising. We had an enormous catalog department and ran full-page ads in trade publications.

Over the years we had cable customers in every state. I had a great customer base and a wonderful group of loyal employees, who remain good friends to this day.

I semi-retired from the cable business in the 70's and turned management of the operations over to my son, J. E. Davidson who, with partners, built some systems of their own. I moved from Batesville to Little Rock and enjoyed my new-found freedom.

I had a yacht at Gulfport/Biloxi, Mississippi and commuted back and forth between there and Little Rock in my twin-engine airplane. I happened to be there when Hurricane Camille came along and flew my airplane out just ahead of the hurricane. A local captain took my yacht to the back bay out of harm's way. Hurricane Camille did awesome property damage with lots of lives lost. With winds in excess of 200 miles per hour and tides over 30 feet, it was the worst hurricane to strike the North American continent in recorded history. Though the entire area was under martial law by the National Guard to prevent sightseers and looting, I

had a permit from local authorities which allowed me access to anywhere I wanted to go. I took a lot of pictures and did some human interest stories. I wrote and published two books on Hurricane Camille. The 35,000 copies were a quick sell out and they have now become collector's items.

In 1970 my wife, Janet Marie, came into my life and she has been a very positive influence in my life. We are very devoted and compatible and over the years we have traveled a lot in our airplane and yachts. We have flown to many islands in the Bahamas and Caribbean and finally became bored with all the beaches and palm trees beginning to look alike!

I was fascinated with jewelry and gemstones and I suppose I wanted to emulate my dad. As a hobby, I had been making fine gold jewelry in the basement of our Little Rock home and setting diamonds and other gem stones. My hobby grew and I had lots of customers who wanted one-of-a-kind items of jewelry. We became concerned about the security of having an operation like this in our home and moved it to a downtown office building where we built up a large and very successful jewelry business. We were both wholesale and retail. It became a burden on both of us, working us long hours every day, so we sold it. We are happy to say that the business still thrives under the ownership of our good friend, Harold Murchison, who purchased it from us in the early 80's.

We resumed traveling in our airplane, yachts and motor coaches and went to places far and wide. We were cruising our new yacht, the "Janet Marie II," from Louisville, Kentucky to Florida via the Ohio, Arkansas and Mississippi Rivers and the Intracoastal Waterway when we stopped at a beautiful new marina at Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi. The Gulf coast had always been a favorite place of ours and we just decided to spend the winter there. It is a beautiful and interesting area with lots of fine restaurants and things to do. We flew back to Little Rock by commercial airline to fly our airplane to an airport that was convenient to our yacht moorage and then hired someone to drive our car there. We were also close to New Orleans and had a wonderful time there during the mild winter.

For several years we had been looking for a paradise to move to and decided on Naples, Florida. We flew our airplane there and flew commercial airplanes back to to the Bay Saint Louis Marina to pick up our car. While living in a condominium, we built a typical Florida home complete with a solar heated swimming pool and spa. We were so busy with our new home construction that we hired another captain to bring our yacht from Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi to Naples, Florida.

We enjoyed our time in Naples because our good friends, Eddie and Madeline Holland, had also retired there and we had many wonderful visits with them and with their talented daughter, artist and decorator Sheila Cotton/Bardes and her husband, Oliver. Eddie was also a pilot and great artist and we had known them for many years. We have an enviable collection of paintings by both Eddie and Sheila displayed in our home here in Arkansas. As I write this Eddie passed away a few years ago and Madeline is in poor health. However, we have been on many wonderful trips with Eddie and Madeline. Other friends who are equally dear to us are Redding and Marion Stevenson and their three daughters who moved from Arkansas to Boca Raton, Florida a number of years ago. We have enjoyed many visits and vacations with them, as well.

We had been flying to Naples for many years, but this quaint and beautiful city was "discovered" by the media about the time we moved there and it soon became the fastest growing city in the country, a distinction I believe it still holds. The area became extremely crowded with contractors and workers of all trades and we

became tired of it. After 3-1/2 years in Naples, Florida we sold our home there and decided to move back to Arkansas to be closer to our children and grandchildren and business interests. On July 1, 1988 we flew our airplane from Naples to our home city of Little Rock, Arkansas, rented a car and purchased 11 acres which we had previously considered buying. We flew back to Naples by commercial airline, and hired professional packers and shippers. August 1, 1988 found us enroute to Arkansas in our car followed by a huge moving van. The property that we purchased here is on the top of an east-west ridge about 25 minutes north of Little Rock. The land is almost solid rock and we used dynamite and heavy equipment to excavate for our large home which is mostly underground. The reason I am talking about this is because we are very serious about our home becoming a cable television museum as soon as we can get all our historical cable materials which date back to 1948 and other stuff organized.

Realizing the historical significance of my role in cable television and also realizing that we would never get my biography complete because of all our "toys", we sold our last yacht and our last motor coach. Also, due to health problems and the constraints of time, I voluntarily grounded myself and we sold our beautiful twin-engine airplane last year after 52 years and about 17,000 hours of flying. This was a strong emotional experience for me, to give up flying after so many years. Much of my flying time was in connection with my cable interests and I always considered my airplanes one of my most important business tools.

After moving back to Arkansas from Florida, with the help of Louis French at Tuckerman, we located Naomi Toler, the widow of my first paying subscriber and her story is detailed in this booklet.

We have a wonderful family, and are proud of them all. We make albums of everything we do which are educational as well as historical. We have done a lot of things that cannot be repeated due to death or illness of the many famous people we have met. Also, there are a number of places we have visited that we no longer consider to be safe at this time. We feel that we are writing a part of truthful history and that history should not be rewritten just to please someone's ideology.

One year ago on August 25, 1997, I was admitted to a hospital for a very routine surgery and the story is a nightmare after that. All of my present health problems were created by careless and incompetent hospital personnel and what should have been a five day hospital stay turned out to be 74 days and four major surgeries! Additionally, my recovery period is painfully slow and taking much time.

The surgeons told us that they almost lost me three times and I was on life support several times. Last week Janet and I spent over an hour with a friend who is one of the best neurosurgeons in the country and after looking at my MRI pictures he said that my lumbar area was now inoperable and that surgery might make it worse. This confirms what another neurosurgeon had told us. I can only stand for brief periods and can only walk for short distances. The bottom line is that I have already lost more than a year of productivity and it's not over yet.

Prior to my present health problems I had always been very active, working long hours on our projects, but now my disabilities are slowing me down. I am taking physical therapy three times weekly and using a tens unit (electrical shocks about every second.) for my back pain and I believe that this is helping just a little bit.

Diann Lawrence-Poore, who has worked for us for the past seven years is now working almost full-time in our office helping us with our cable related projects. We have also hired her mother, LaVon Robinson, to assist with these projects and

also to do the domestic work. So, despite the fact that I am partially disabled, I have my precious wife, Janet Marie, and my other two ladies and we are gradually getting things whipped into shape.

Our estate attorney has formed the "JAMES YATES DAVIDSON CABLE TELEVISION FOUNDATION" and our goal is to leave all of our 11-acre estate, home, all personal and cable related things intact and donate it all to the foundation. Our home is filled with collectibles from our travels as well as gifts from family and friends. After we get all of our cable related photos and materials organized, we plan to offer tours to people within the cable industry, historians and other interested parties. Some day we plan to donate this entire estate to the National Cable Center and Museum at the University of Denver in Denver, Colorado and it is our desire that someone will live here to act as caretakers and docents after we are both gone. (And we hope this is not soon!)

As I mentioned above, Janet and I have enjoyed much travel by almost every conceivable mode. Since I am a licensed commercial pilot we have flown our own airplanes to places far and wide. We have landed on many remote islands, including three trips to San Salvador where Christopher Columbus first landed on October 12, 1492. It's a small, remote island in the Atlantic Ocean, almost 400 miles from Florida. The only reason we could land there is the fact that an old abandoned NASA radar tracking station left a good runway. The last time we flew there was on the October 12, 1992, the quincentennial year. There was a celebration which included the reenactment of Columbus' first landing with crews and participants coming ashore in the garb of 1492. It was really a thrill.

We have spent many hours in our airplane flying over the Atlantic Ocean within the Bermuda Triangle and never had any thought of fear whatsoever. Many of the incidents that have been reported in books and publications on the Bermuda Triangle have been exaggerated for book sales and to make movies. Most of the disappearances and accidents have been the result of inexperienced aviators and boaters. It's a big ocean out there! We have seen many small single-engine airplanes on some of the islands. We would never fly over water in a single-engine airplane. Small boats try to make the trip across the Gulf Stream and never make it. It was recently reported that a man's family was on a cruise ship departing Miami for Grand Bahama Island and he missed the ship. Guess what? He purchased a jet ski and tried to make the 108 mile trip on this small craft. He had no navigation instruments and for certain would have never found the island. His jet ski was swamped a few miles offshore and a passing freighter rescued him. As I stated, many of the incidents and disappearances of airplanes and boats in the Bermuda Triangle were caused by stupidity and/or inexperience.

As you can see from reading the above, both Janet and I love to travel and explore and we have flown on every commercial airliner from the venerable DC-3's to both the supersonic British and French Concorde. We even made history when we flew on a British Concorde from the island of Aruba. The whole island population just about was lined up along the runway to watch us take off and after we took off our pilot came back around to the runway and did a low fly-by. We have the newspaper articles of this historical event plus our own pictures taken from the inside of the Concorde showing the people lined up by the runway. It was a thrilling experience.

As I mentioned before, I also have a Coast Guard Captain's license and Janet and I have cruised extensively in our own ocean-class yachts and we have also made 22 voyages on cruise ships to many far away exotic destinations. In Venezuela we have ridden in a dugout canoe on a lake in the jungle and have seen Angel Falls, the world's tallest at 3,212 feet. We have traveled on a large bamboo raft down

Jamaica's River Brae which winds through a dense jungle where natives wear little or no clothing. We have been on native boats on the Amazon River and some of its tributaries. We have fished for and caught the vicious piranhas. As a matter of fact, we have done two 2000 mile cruises on the Amazon River with our good friend, Loren McIntyre, who is known as the world's foremost authority on South America. On commission from National Geographic, Loren located the source of the Amazon River and a lake, "Laguna McIntyre" high in the Andes Mountains, is named after him. Loren is a prolific writer and has authored many books on South America and has written extensive illustrated articles for many publications, especially for National Geographic Magazine.

Our travels have also included several places in Turkey including Istanbul, Izmir, Pergamum and Ephesus and we have cruised the beautiful Greek Islands in the Mediterranean Sea. On the Island of Santorini we rode donkeys up a very steep zigzag trail on the side of an extinct volcanic crater. We have been to France, Alaska, Great Britain, through the Panama Canal, Canada, every country in Central America and just about every accessible place in the Caribbean and Bahamas. We have cruised to four of the Hawaiian Islands and have flown over them four times by helicopter. On the Big Island of Hawaii we had an exiting helicopter ride over Kilauea, reported to be the world's most active volcano. We got some awesome pictures looking straight down into the inferno.

We have also owned several large motor coaches and have traveled by this mode extensively in the United States and Mexico. While traveling in Mexico in our motor coach, we met the widow of the Mexican bandit, Poncho Villa, in Chihuahua, Mexico. She was in her mid-90's at the time and very small and frail. She greeted us on a modified wheel chair. We saw the touring car with bullet holes in it that Pancho Villa was assassinated in and as I recall it was a 1927 Dodge. We also saw a lot of his memorabilia including "wanted posters". This was in January, 1981 and a few months later we read of her death. When we were there she was occupying a few rooms of their 100-room mansion and we were told by our bilingual guide that, after her death, the Mexican government would make a museum of the mansion.

In Mexico we crossed the Sierra Madre' Mountains living in our motor coach for seven days while tied down on the flat car of a train, traveling through a lot of tunnels, crossing a lot of dangerously high trestles and even seeing Tarahumara Indian families still living in caves. We have also driven the entire 1,000 mile (often treacherous) full length of the Baja Peninsula. I almost forgot, we have ridden in a hot-air balloon through Napa Valley in California and also have done parasailing several times near Acapulco, Mexico. Three times we have been in ski lift gondolas to the top of very high mountains. We have been the guests of President Ronald Reagan, in Los Angeles and have become good friends with Joe Rosenthal who lives in San Francisco. You will recall that it was Joe who took the famous WW-II picture of the U. S. Marines raising our flag on Iwo Jima for which he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize.

For a number of years we have been good friends with the widely known aviation author, Arthur Percy and his wife, Audrey, from Sharnbrook, England. We have 14 albums of correspondence with the Percys that occupy a prominent place in our library, along with the 14 autographed books that he has written as well as a number of gifts they have so graciously given to us. Unfortunately, Arthur died suddenly on February 28, 1998. He is greatly missed because he was such a happy, jolly person and brought joy to everyone who was fortunate enough to know him.

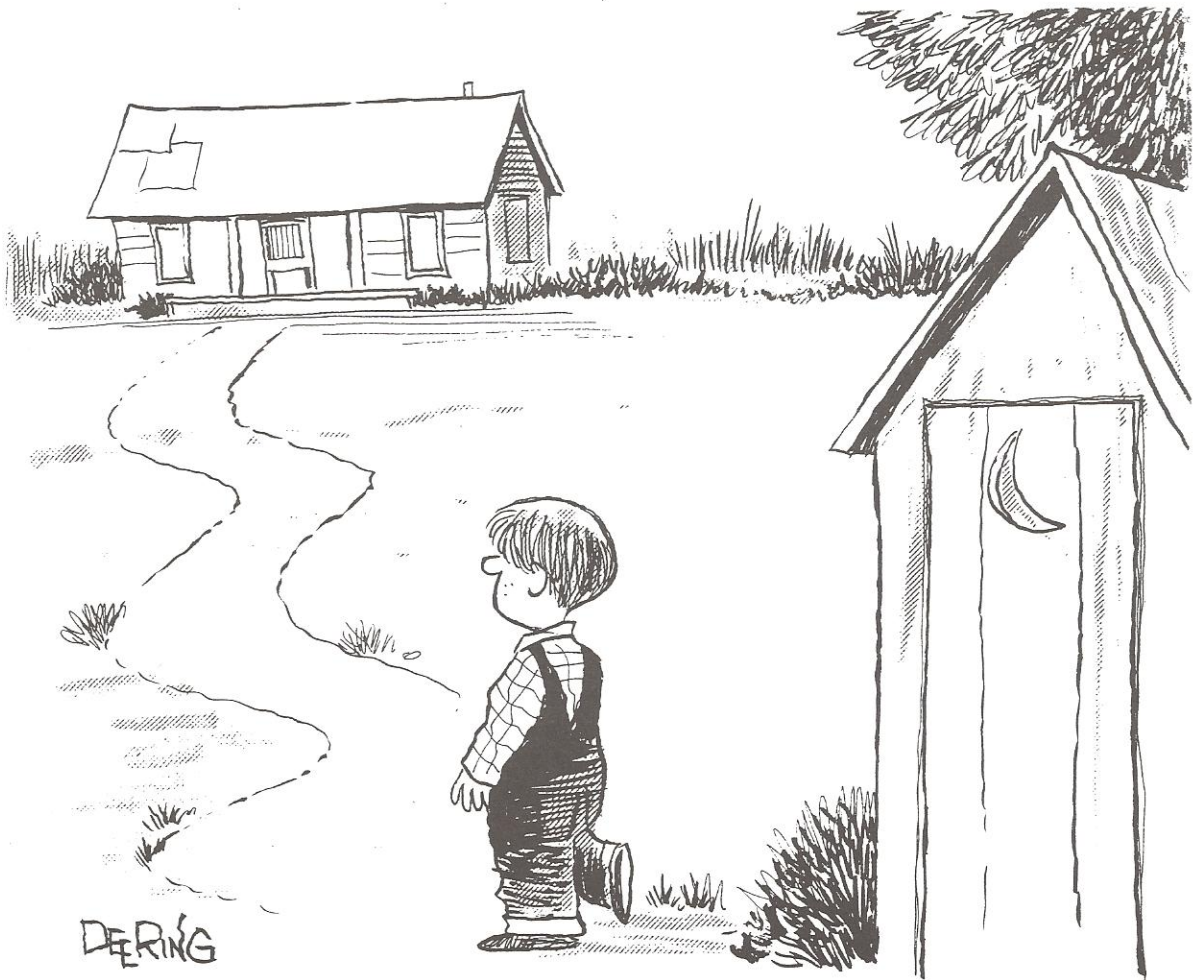
In our travels we have become lasting friends with many prominent people and God has truly blessed Janet and me. We have enjoyed a wonderful life together and we are not through yet! As soon as I am stronger we have many, many more projects to complete, places to see and people to meet.

So, this concludes the title of my story, "From Affluence to Poverty and Back to Affluence" and I hope I haven't bored you with too much detail. I have left out a lot but to tell it all would be much too much. Just one more thing: When I was a small orphan I wanted a bicycle more than anything but never had one. Before my son, Jamie, was old enough to reach the pedals I purchased him a 24" bicycle and had to put training wheels on it. As soon as he was old enough to drive, I bought him a new car. I worked hard and tried to be a good provider and am so very glad that none of my family were ever homeless or hungry. I say from experience that it is not pleasant.

I worked long and hard during my cable years and cable television has been good to me. Janet and I have also been very blessed with a wonderful family and many, many great friends. We are especially proud of everyone who has joined us to celebrate Jimmy's life on this 50th Anniversary of the beginning of cable television!

Thank You & God Bless You

Jimmy & Janet Davidson



We went from indoor plumbing to a two-holer out back

**MEMORIES FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD AFTER MY PARENTS WERE DECEASED
AND WE BECAME VERY POOR, LIVING IN THE SMALL TOWN OF CABOT.**



There were lots of strawberry farms in the Cabot area and back in the depression years I was paid 2¢ per quart. If I worked real hard I could pick 30 to 35 quarts daily.

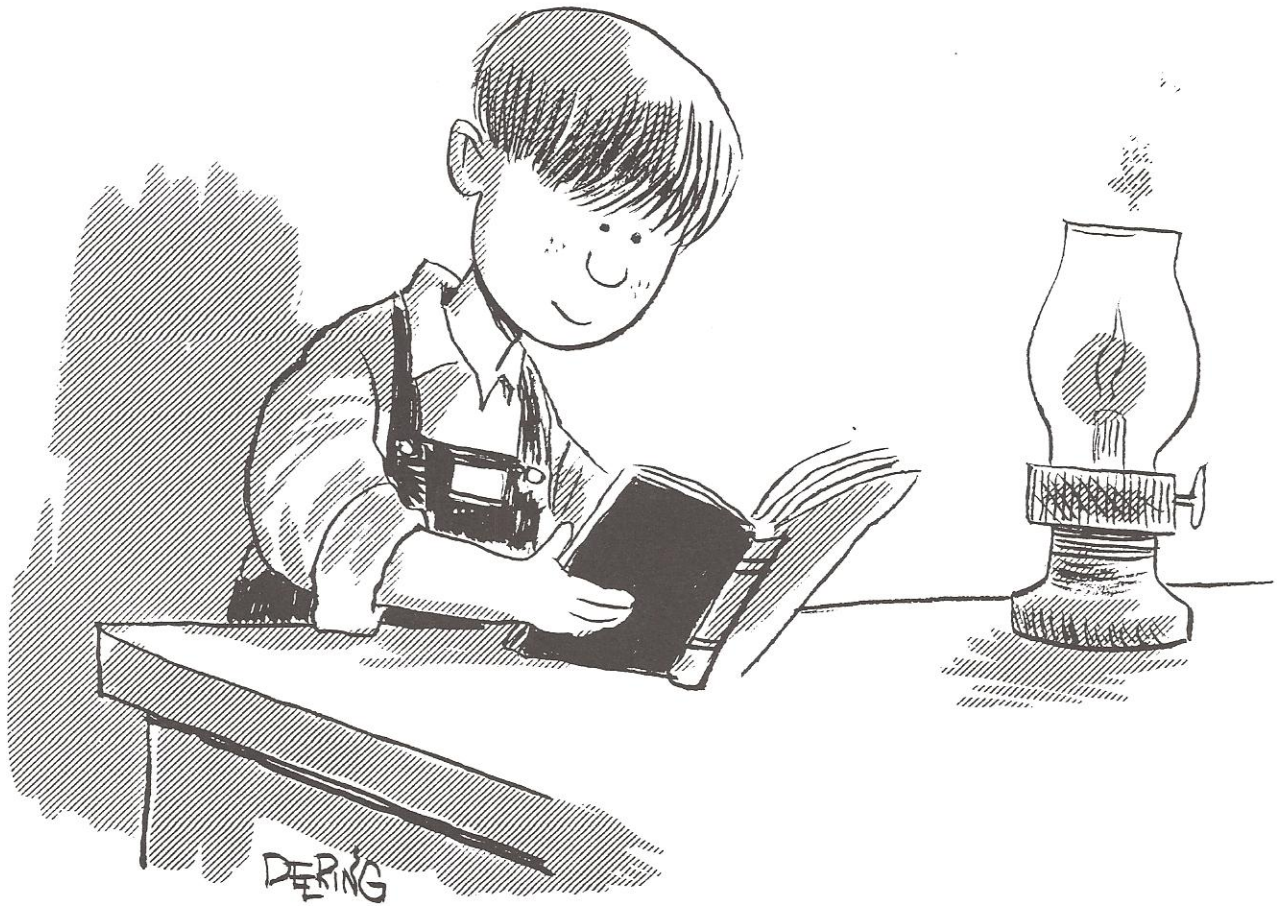


Most people today were not around when "Medicine Men" (con artists) visited small towns hawking their "tonic" (usually containing colored alcohol) which would cure ANY disease. They usually had an old Indian who purportedly developed the "secret" formula. They often used live music to cause the crowds to gather. They usually came to Cabot on Saturdays when there were crowds in town.



During our stay in Cabot following our parents death we were often hungry and would pick wild black berries in season and do other things to put food on our table. I still had a Daisy Air Rifle that dad had given me before he died. Having heard the nursery rhyme, "Four and Twenty Blackbirds Baked in a Pie," I decided to shoot a blackbird and fry it. It took me quite a few B-Bs before I finally killed one. Grandma helped me scald it to remove the feathers and get the meat dressed for frying. The meat was so tough and tasted so terrible and bitter that we couldn't eat it.

When we lived in Cabot during the depression years, we didn't worry about being poor. It was tough on all four of us but we just made do with what we had.



For the first time in our lives we had no electricity and we had to study by kerosene lamps.



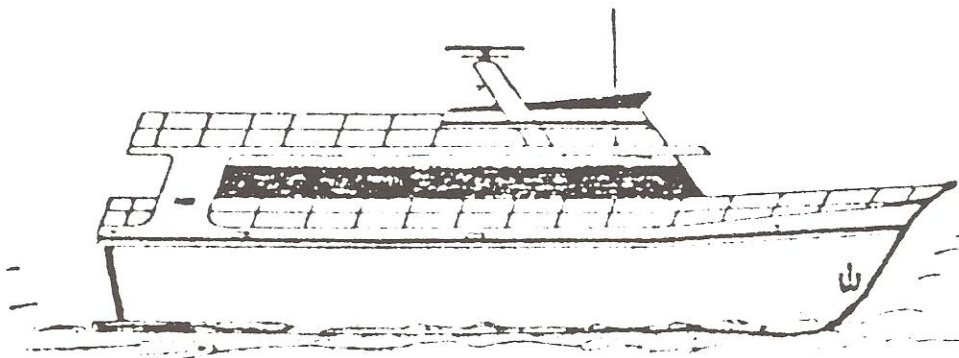
We couldn't afford to have our shoes resoled so grandma showed us how to cut cardboard to fit over the holes.

FROM CHILDHOOD DREAMS TO REALITY



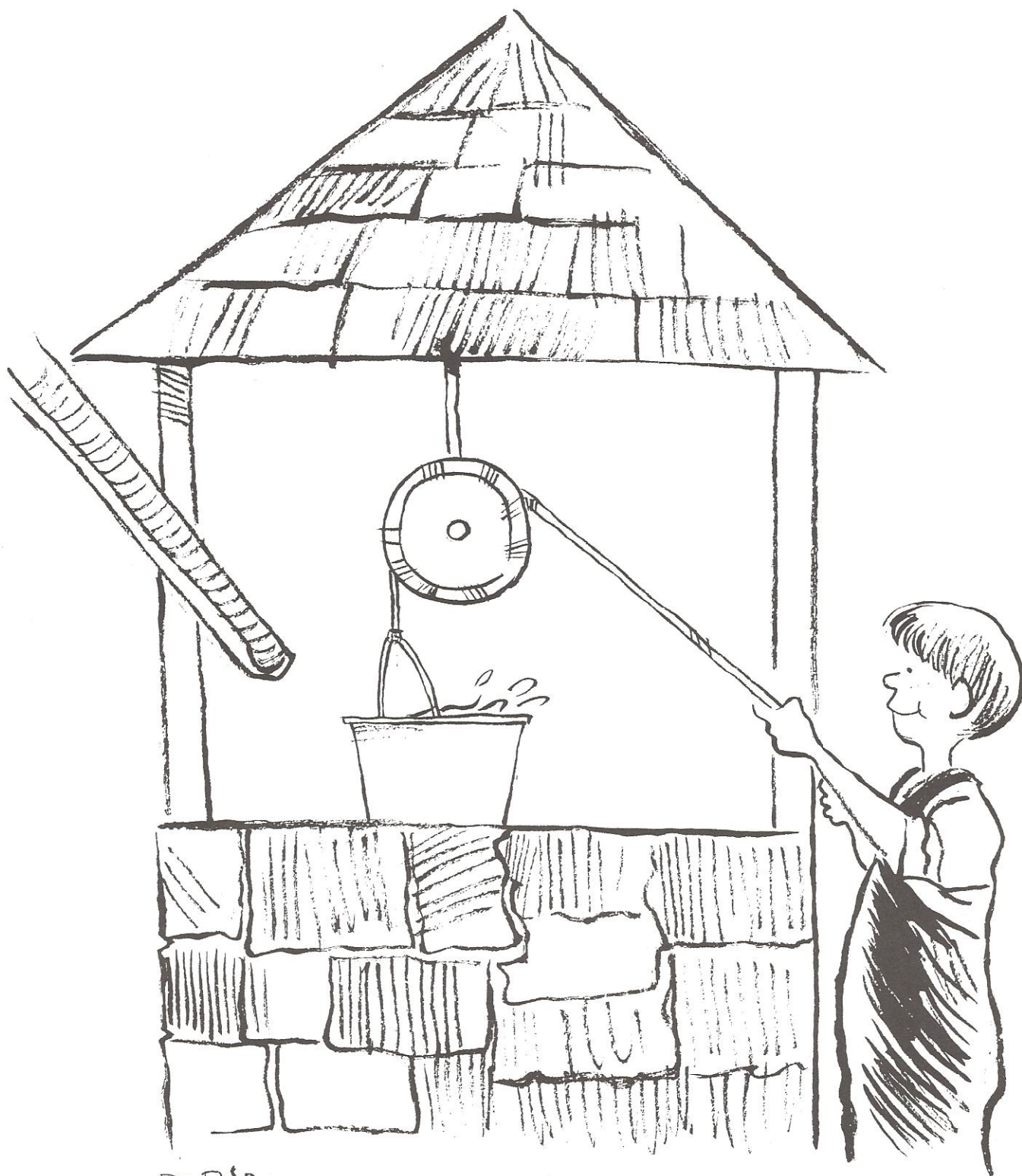
A ditch near our house filled with water following a heavy rain.
I would paddle around in grandma's #3 wash tub,
fantasizing that I was a ship's captain sailing to far away places.

Captain J.Y. & Janet Marie Davidson



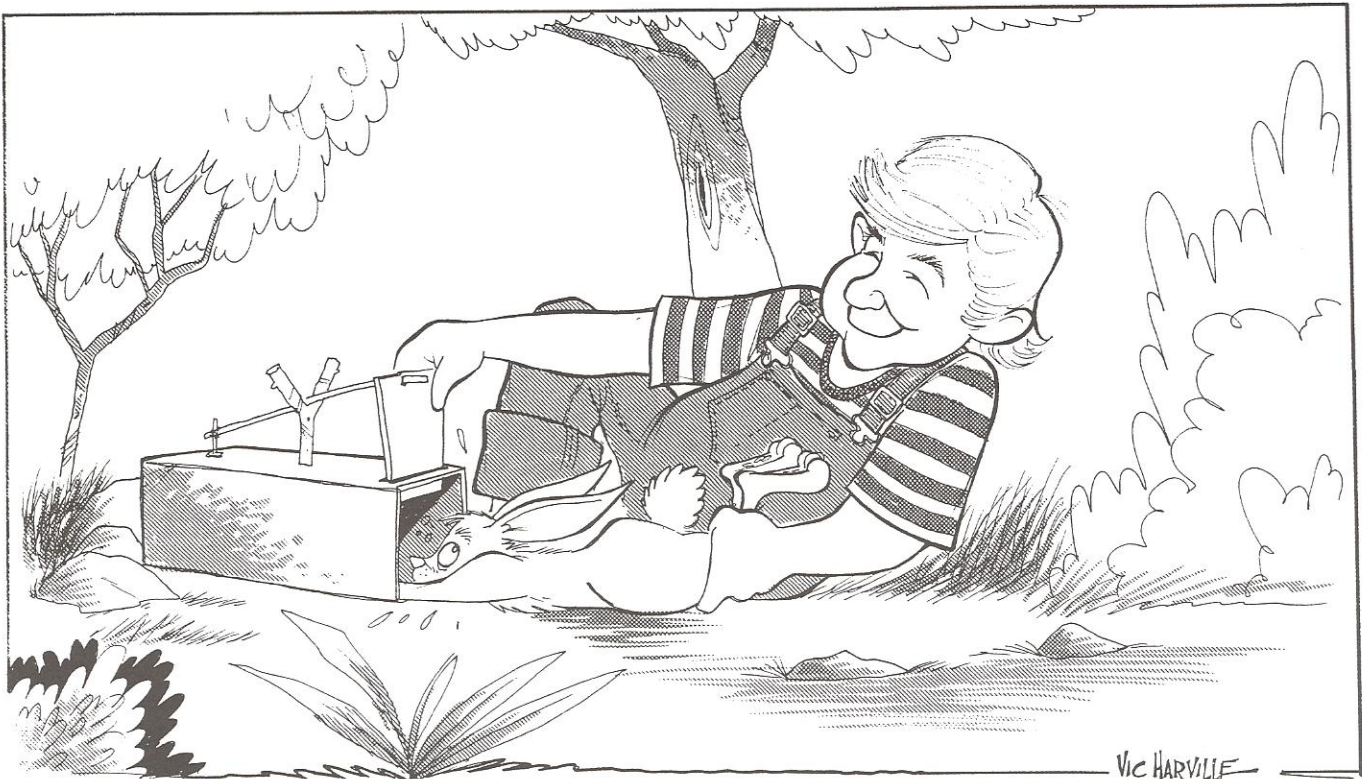
THE YACHT JANET MARIE II

This is an enlargement of our business card with a drawing
of our last yacht, a fully equipped 70 foot ocean class vessel.



For the first time in our lives we had no indoor plumbing or running water. A cistern on the back porch caught rain water from the roof and stored it for future use. We drew water from the cistern in a bucket attached to a rope and pulley.

DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION IN CABOT, ARKANSAS



Having been raised on a farm, my grandmother was very resourceful. She taught me how to build rabbit traps. I scrounged scraps of lumber in alleys and built the traps. She also taught me how to skin and dress the rabbits for cooking.



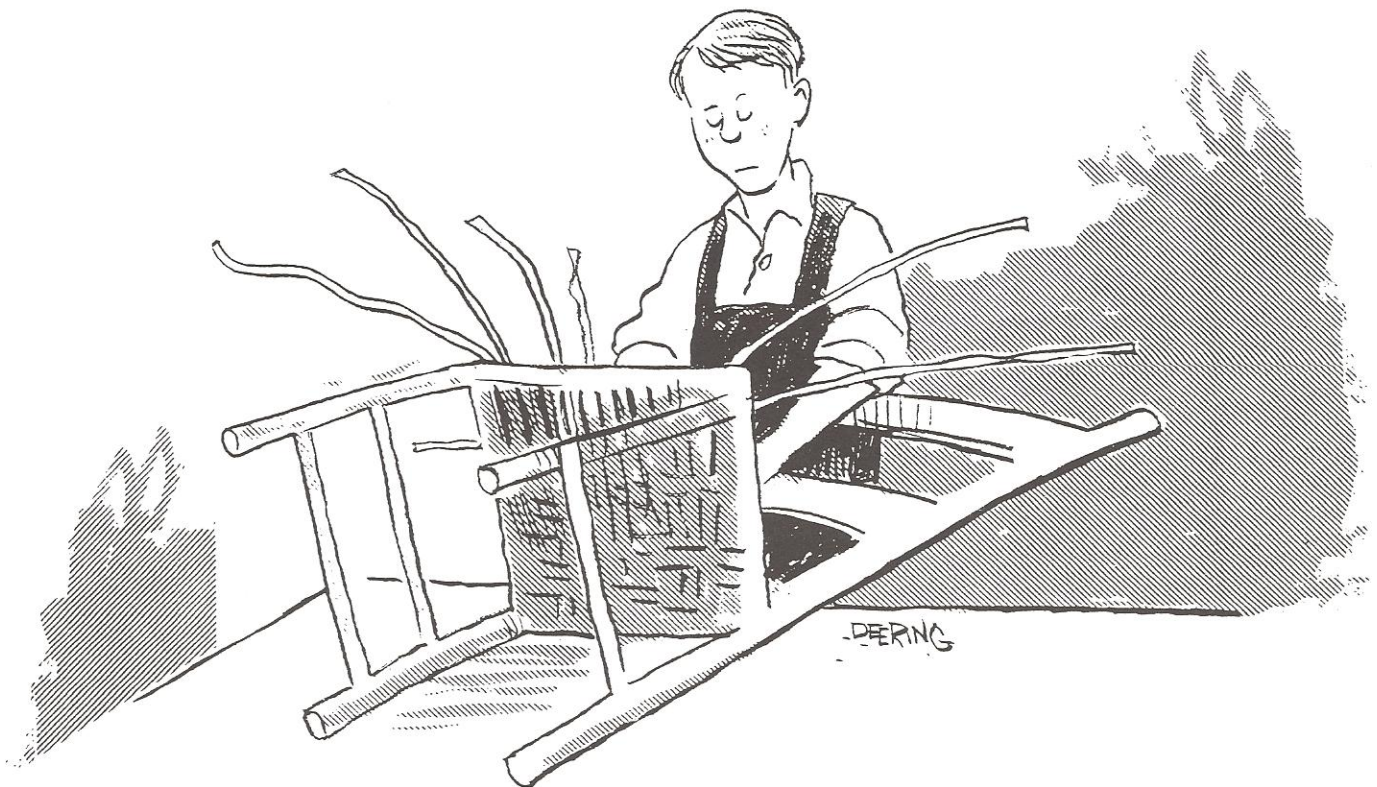
We had not enjoyed beef for years. A local man butchered a cow and brought us a beef roast. We momentarily left it on the kitchen table and a big hound dog jumped through the broken screen door and ran away with the roast. In hot pursuit grandma and I caught the dog, wrested the roast from his mouth, washed it good and then cooked and ate it.

- NOTE -

Illustrations on the previous pages depict the era during the Great Depression following our parent's death when we moved from Little Rock to Cabot and lived with our grandmother until her passing. The following illustrations are highlights after this era in Cabot.

After we buried grandma, we were sent from Cabot to Demopolis, Alabama to live with relatives whom we had never seen. As stated in my personal history, this man and his wife were extremely cruel to us and we stayed there just a few months.

At age 13 I ran away with bleeding whelps on my back and made it back to Arkansas. Exactly two weeks later my little sisters, Dorothy, age 10 and Norma Jeanne, age 7, also ran away.

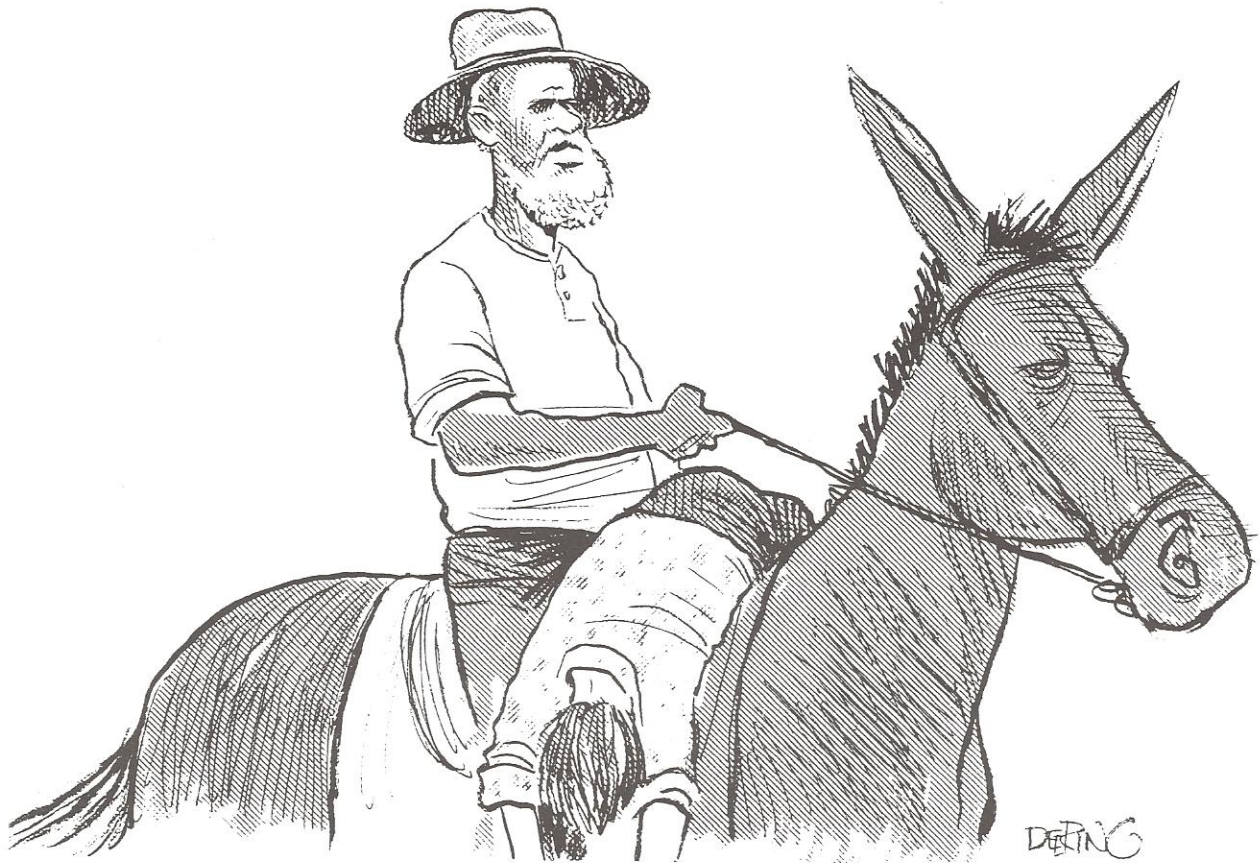


I was only 13 years old but they made me work at odd jobs. I got paid 10¢ per hour for weaving bottoms in cane-bottom chairs and if I worked real hard I could do four or five chairs a day. After a hard days work I would leave with bleeding fingers.

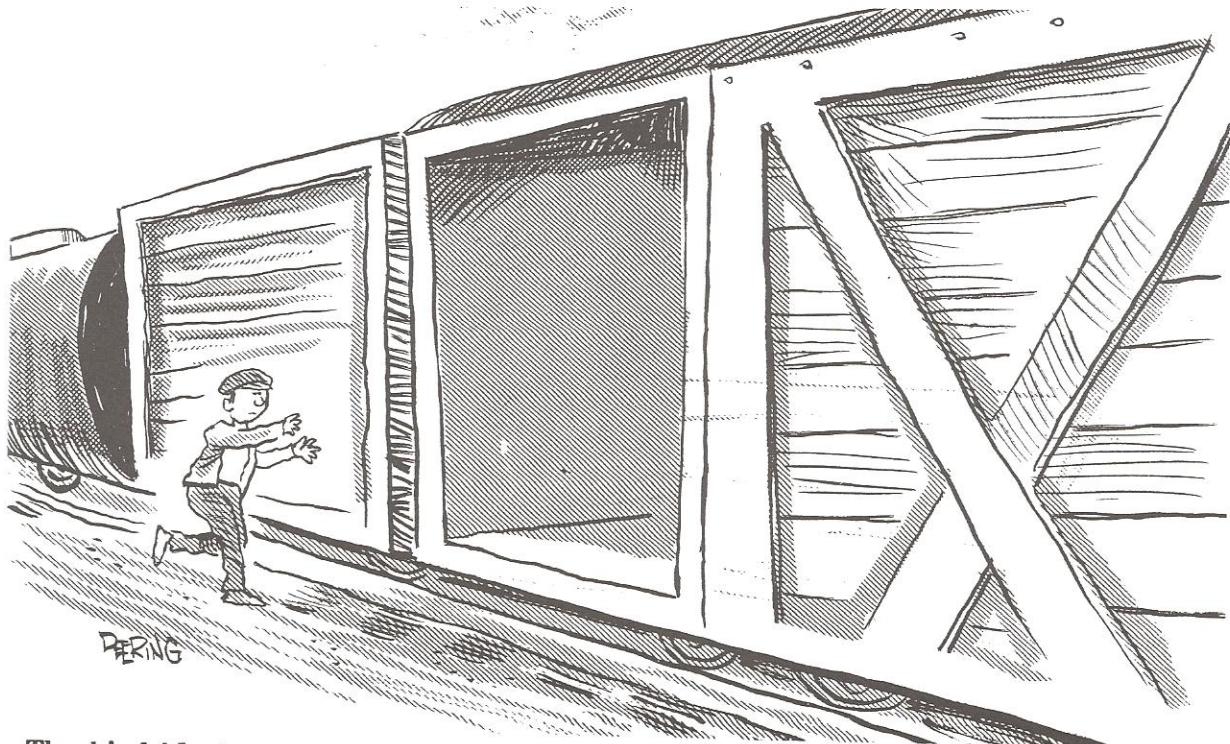


After I ran away they beat my sisters unmercifully because they wouldn't tell where I went. Two weeks after my leaving they also ran away chased by the people we lived with wielding a shotgun. My frightened little sisters took refuge at neighbors until police arrived. They soon joined me in Arkansas, thanks to some charitable folks.

AT AGE 13 - RUNNING AWAY FROM DEMOPOLIS, ALABAMA

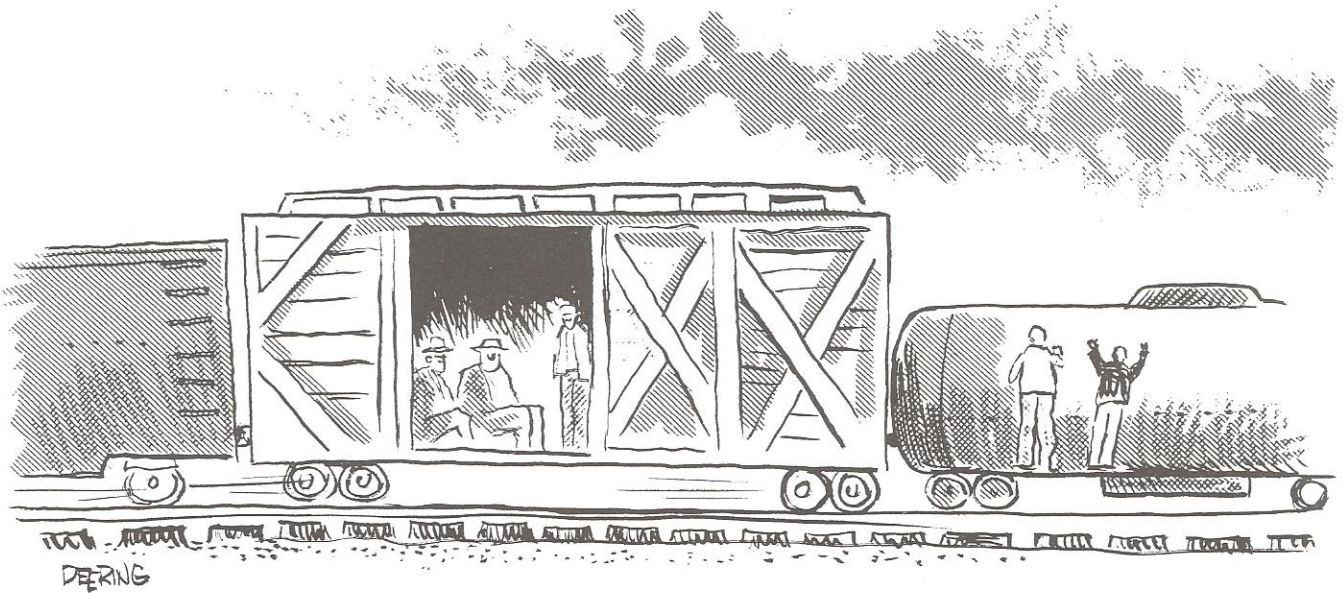


I passed out from hunger and heat exhaustion on a dusty road between Okolona and Aberdeen, Mississippi. When I awakened I was across a mule and found myself gazing into the kind face of a black man with a magnificent white beard.



The kind black man took me to his home where he helped me wash up and his wife fed me. I then caught a slow moving north-bound freight train.

ABOUT JULY 1, 1935 - ALABAMA TO ARKANSAS



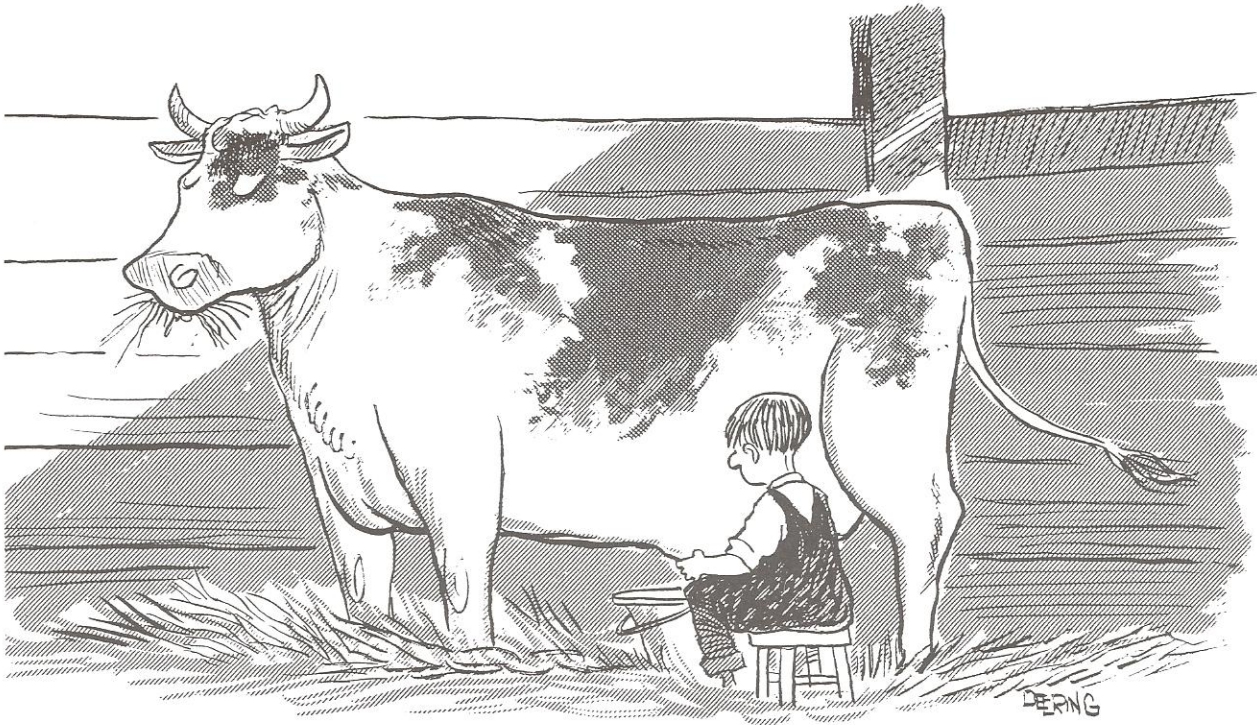
At age 13 I found myself with many grown hobos on the freight train



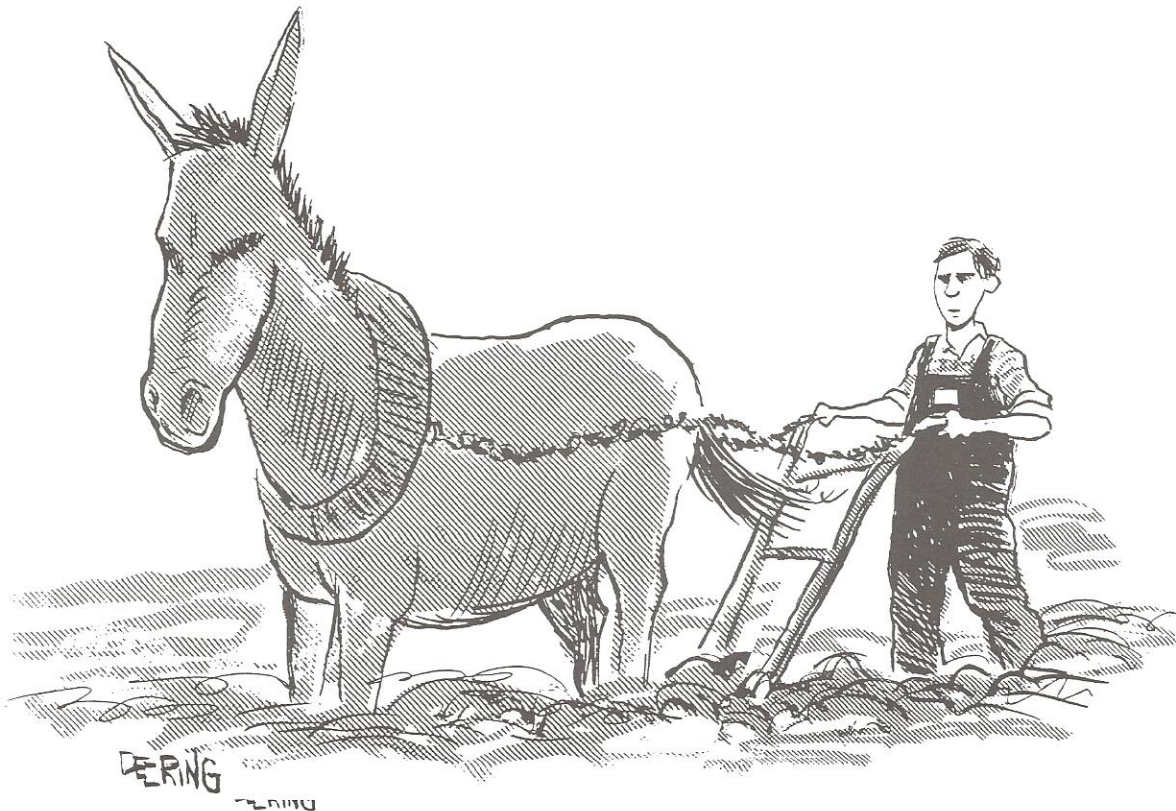
When the train made a stop in a rural area, a crew member made us all get off. When the train started moving again, we all got back on and made it to Okolona where I spent the night sleeping on the hard floor of a box car.

- On a farm east of Star City, Arkansas at age 14 -

At age 14 the truant officer caught up with me and took me to live on a with an old couple on their farm east of Star City, Arkansas. She said that they wanted to adopt a little boy like me. What they really wanted was a slave so after only two weeks there, I waited until they were asleep and slipped out around midnight.



Milking cows at four a.m. and plowing in the hot sun was not my cup of tea. I am definitely NOT a country boy!



- On a farm east of Star City, Arkansas at age 14 -



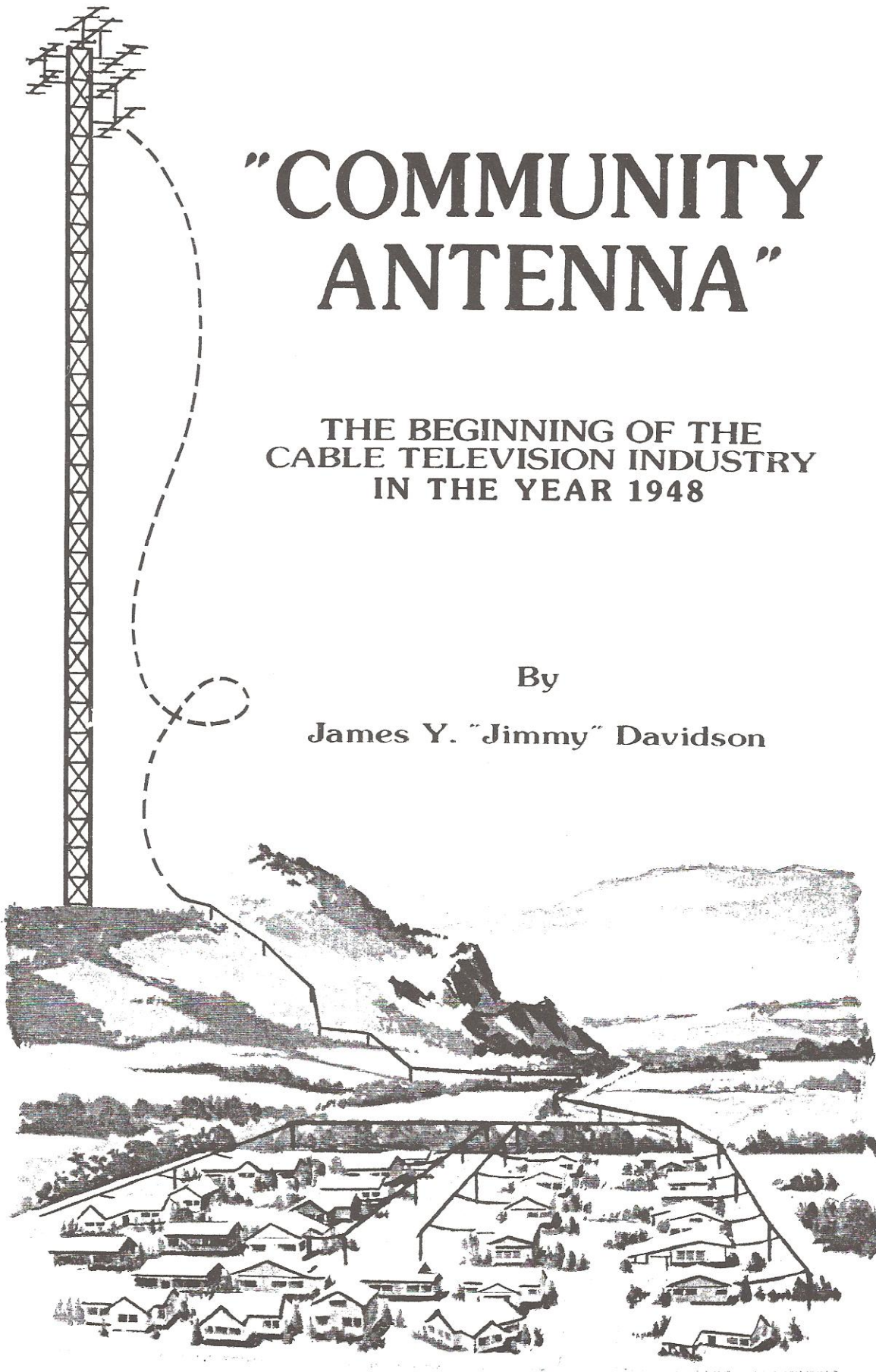
While I was staying with a couple on their farm near Star City, I saw a Model-T Ford up against a tree in the front yard and I asked the lady what had happened. She said, "Some city slickers sold that contraption to Paw and he got to going 'round and 'round in the yard and couldn't get the durn thing stopped so he ran it into that big oak tree and it's been there ever since." I asked her if I got it started would she let me drive it but I never could get it started.

"COMMUNITY ANTENNA"

THE BEGINNING OF THE
CABLE TELEVISION INDUSTRY
IN THE YEAR 1948

By

James Y. "Jimmy" Davidson



"COMMUNITY ANTENNA" The Beginning of Cable Television

By J. Y. Davidson

Copyright, 1994

Those who have entered the cable television business in recent times may have a problem relating to some of this text and may find it strange. In order to appreciate references to the early days of cable, one must project themselves back in time to that era and realize that this was long before satellite technology and all signals had to be received off-air or by microwave and coaxial cable. Also, one must realize that the state-of-the-art has changed dramatically insofar as equipment is concerned. Vacuum tubes and hard wiring are a thing of the past and have been replaced by transistors, chips and PC boards.

"Community antenna" evolved to "cable television" in stages. Our first systems had only one channel. Then we had three channel systems followed by five channel systems. When we reached the twelve channel plateau we were of the opinion that this was absolutely the ultimate and that there would never be need for more than twelve channels.

Anyone not involved in CATV back in the 40's and 50's, probably never heard the term, "community antenna system." In the beginning this was what we called our systems, because that term most accurately described what we were doing. Quite simply, we were installing tall towers with sophisticated antenna arrays to which the entire community was connected. We provided for the community more channels and better pictures than were available on a home antenna. Our antennae were more sophisticated and sensitive than was possible for a home antenna, and we located our receiving tower on the most favorable site, usually a hill or mountain top. We also looked for an area free of electrical or other man-made interference.

Locating an antenna site was the single most important thing for a successful community antenna system. I located hundreds of antenna sites for systems. It was a demanding chore, and I used my airplane to hunt for these sites. I also used topographical and other maps of the area. Following the aerial survey, I would go back to these locations by ground transportation and check for electrical or other interference. When a favorable site was located, I then faced the problem of acquisition. Sometimes the preferred site was not available, and I had to continue searching. After finally locating a suitable available site, and obtaining an option to purchase the site, I would do a signal survey and make a final determination as to the tower(s) height and type of antenna arrays. I tried many approaches to signal testing, some methods proving impractical. In addition to towers, I tried antennae fastened to tethered barrage balloons and even fastened antennae on my airplane and on a helicopter. Since the advent of satellite technology, antenna site location is not so critical and can be quickly determined. This contrasts greatly with our site location problems in the early days, which could drag out to weeks, or even months.

Today, just about every city town and village, and even rural areas are wired for cable television. Recent reports indicate there are 55 million subscribers and this number is growing rapidly. However, in the days of "community antenna," not every city or town was a viable candidate for a system. So, one of my services

to potential system operators was an "engineering and feasibility analysis." Following an inspection of the city or town, including physical, economic, cost of plant, signals available, potential subscribers, etc., etc., I would produce a lengthy written report complete with drawings and technical data for my clients. I did hundreds of these over a wide area of the country.

Another service I performed for my clients was appearing before city councils to help them obtain a franchise, and helping them with joint-use pole attachment agreements. I also drew up maps of the complete system layout, and was successful in many turnkey bids.

In the days of "community antenna" our competition was the home antenna. The difference between the quantity and quality of my community antenna signals and what was available on home antennae, I called "differential." It was this "differential" that made it possible for us to sell our service.

In this book I am not trying to "steal anyone else's thunder." I do not wish to take away from my fellow pioneers, all of whom shared the hardships of pioneering a new and until then, unheard of industry. We all went through the hassles of educating city councils, bankers, utilities, etc., and we all suffered the lack of suitable cable and equipment.

I personally don't believe it is known exactly who connected the world's first paying subscriber. I do know that I was among the first to connect a paying subscriber at my small, experimental system in Tuckerman, Arkansas. This was in October 1948 and though this small installation continued operation for several years, I did not wire the entire town until some years later. Instead, I chose the larger city of Batesville, which was certainly more lucrative.

While I was experimenting in Tuckerman and getting my Batesville system going, I heard of a few other community antenna systems in widespread areas of the country. To my knowledge, these other entrepreneurs were mostly located in the Panther Valley region of Pennsylvania and in Astoria Oregon. I wouldn't question that there may have been others who were quietly experimenting with the concept of community antenna. Early on, the few of us known to be building systems simultaneously, were not aware of each other. Soon we did learn of each other, and many of us became friends, visiting and drawing on each other's experience. I also recall an early but unheralded pioneer in Fort Payne, Alabama. He passed away soon after putting his system in operation. The system was in terrible disrepair and I subsequently rebuilt it for his wife and daughter.

I had lots of visitors to my Batesville, Arkansas system. They came from all over the country by auto and airplane, some unannounced. For instance, I was at my antenna site one day in 1952 when a Lincoln drove up with four gentlemen, all Arkansans, all radio broadcasters. They were Fred Stevenson and Rip Lindsay from Fayetteville, Don Thompson from Rogers and Bob Wheeler, from Harrison. After seeing my operation they all became involved in cable. I designed and built turnkey systems for many of my visitors.

It would be near impossible for me to list here the thousands of names and locations of all my cable friends and customers nationwide. Since this book is primarily about community antenna in Arkansas, I will limit my list to early pioneers in this area. Most of them were my customers at DAVCO Electronics. While some later became well known nationally, others went about their business quietly. Some of these early pioneers are still active, while others have departed to that

great cable system in Heaven. Here are the names and locations of the ones I recall:

As mentioned above, Bob Wheeler of Harrison, Don Thompson, Leon McAuliff and Bud Williams of Rogers, Fred Stevenson and Rip Lindsay of Fayetteville, Jack Treece of Marshall and Heber Springs, T. C. Masters of Mena, William Daniels of Berryville and Bob Neathery & Paul Thompson of West Plains, Mo. Too numerous to name here are all our employees at DAVCO Electronics and throughout our cable systems. They, too, are pioneers and some of them are still in the cable industry. I hired and trained most of them when they were quite young. I don't think any of the former DAVCO employees will resent me naming just one former employee, a true pioneer who worked as office manager of our companies for 24 years before retiring. Delores Wallace, was 90 years young last Christmas eve (1993), and she is still going strong. ✱

Then, there's my son, James E. (Jamie) Davidson who is most certainly a pioneer. He was just four years old when I connected my first subscriber 46 years ago, so he really grew up in the community antenna business. Jamie worked in our companies during summer months and any time when he was not in school classes. He worked in all departments, with construction crews, in our laboratory and assembly line, and in our offices. I was able to turn the entire operation of our electronics company and all our systems over to Jamie when he was a very young man, and he operated these businesses until we sold them.

The Panther Valley region of Pennsylvania possibly had more community antenna pioneers than any other area of the country. It was a natural for community antenna service at that time, due to the prominent north-south mountain ranges that created valleys. Towns and cities in these valleys were cut off from television signals, while on top of the mountains and ridges the signals were plentiful. This inspired entrepreneurs in the valley to figure out a way to get these mountain top signals down into the valley. Many of them were home appliance dealers and their motive was to sell TV sets.

While I was receiving quite a bit of publicity about my "Batesville in the Arkansas Ozark Mountains system," my contemporaries in Pennsylvania were also being publicized. Hungry for technical information and knowledge in this brand new industry, I visited the Panther Valley region several times, meeting pioneers like Marty Malarkey, George Bright, Holland Rannells, Bob Tarlton, Eli Kramer, Al Malin, George Barco and many others. Some of the places I visited were Lansford, Pottsville, Williamsport and Harrisburg. There were others, as I flew to Pennsylvania several times. We all exchanged ideas and drew on each other's experience.

In my files are the minutes of the first meetings that resulted in formation of NCTA, the National Community Television Association. These minutes indicate that preliminary meetings were held on September 18, 1951, September 26, 1951, October 10, 1951, and January 3, 1952. Following this the formal organization of NCTA occurred at the Necho Allen Hotel in Pottsville, Pennsylvania on January 16, 1952 which I attended. The first annual meeting of NCTA was held on June 9, 1952 at the same location. President Marty Malarky called the meeting to order and much business was discussed. One interesting item of business had to do with ethics. It seems that a television dealer who also owned a community antenna system would charge higher prices to connect a subscriber if the subscriber chose to buy his television set from a competing dealer. It was pointed out that these "quick dollar" entrepreneurs, in an effort to make a fast profit also resorted

✱ *UPDATE: Delores Wallace passed away on February 5, 1998 at age 94.*

to slipshod system construction. These unethical operators were, fortunately, in a minority.

I have the minutes of two of the preliminary meetings and the organizational meeting. These meetings were dominated by the Pennsylvania fellows and I was the only "outsider" present.

Also in my files are the minutes of the second annual meeting of NCTA at the Park Sheraton Hotel in New York City on June 8, 1953. I flew my airplane there and landed at Teterboro Airport because it was closest to our convention hotel, the Park Sheraton, in Manhattan. I recall parking my airplane alongside a (now ancient) Ford Tri-motor airplane. It belonged to the famous pilot/entertainer Arthur Godfrey.

In the beginning, community antenna systems were located exclusively in fringe areas, far from the primary signals of television stations. In these early years, none of us thought that our business would be practical in primary signal areas, and none of us predicted that major cities where television stations were located would be viable for cable television. The reason was simple; "who would subscribe to our service when good pictures were available on rabbit ears or a simple home antenna?" As I have stated, satellite technology was unheard of back then, and the many cable only channels we now have were not even dreamed of. Additionally, available equipment in the early days was very limited as compared to today's state-of-the-art. For several years my very first community antenna systems were limited to one channel, all that was available. Following this, available technology produced equipment limited to only three channels.

Next, and I was a pioneer in this field, came the five channel systems. It was tricky to install and maintain, and I give credit to Entron for producing head-end amplifiers and high-Q traps, along with broad-band line amplifiers, that allowed me to engineer and install five channel systems. Adjacent channels were a bit tricky and required very careful alignment in our lab. It was accomplished by utilizing the five low-band channels, 2 through 6, converting high band channels to the low band. I became the national distributor for Entron equipment, and designed my popular "Functional Design" head-end equipment around some of their amplifiers, convertors and traps. I was building and installing five-channel systems when my competition was vehemently denying that it was possible. I recall flying disbelievers to my systems to dispel this notion. My company, DAVCO Electronics Corporation, sold and installed many of my Functional Design head-ends, as well as countless Entron line amplifiers. My son, James E. Davidson, along with others in our company, were kept busy assembling and aligning these head-ends in our DAVCO laboratory. We also had assembly lines where we manufactured passive devices and assembled custom background music systems.

Following my success with Entron equipment and five channel systems, Entron came on the scene with a 12-channel line amplifier that boasted automatic gain control. Initially, 12 television stations were not available in a given location, but we had finally broken the five-channel barrier and soon we were delivering 12 channels on many systems. Despite my successes with adjacent channels, Jerrold Electronics was still insisting that adjacent channels were impossible and they came up with a complex system that allowed, if available, 7 channels. They did this by converting high-band channels to the low band, then re-converting them back to the high band at distribution points throughout the system. At this time, we were easily distributing all available channels up to 12, with our Functional Design Head Ends and adjacent-channel technique. In all fairness,

be it known that Jerrold finally came around and was a major manufacturer of CATV equipment. I often successfully bid against them for turnkey jobs.

I can safely state that all of the early systems have been rebuilt, many more than once. This happened due to the demand for more channels and the constant research and development by a handful of manufacturers, who produced improved equipment in stages. In the quest for additional channels, massive microwave systems were built across the country to bring independent television stations to remote community antenna systems. Two distinct events led to the 40 or more channel systems of today. First, the advent of satellite technology and next, manufacturers of equipment were able to utilize new technology that gave us head-ends and line amplifiers capable of almost unlimited channels. As we all know, 30 and 40 channel systems are currently the norm. With this channel carrying capability, the door was opened to any television station, especially the independents who utilize satellite uplinks, and to entrepreneurs who came up with the many cable-only channels we now have. No doubt, with all these channels, and the 55 million subscribers nationwide, cable television has, to some extent, fragmented the traditional networks and broadcast stations. However, broadcasters and cable systems are both doing quite well.

I believe we can give credit to my friend of long standing, cable entrepreneur Bill Daniels of Denver, Colorado for changing the name "community" to "cable." The acronym, "CATV" remained the same. At about this time, many small community antenna systems resented this name change, and resented the proliferation of the basic service we were providing. It was being done by the large MSO's (Multiple system operators) who were touting their stocks with blue sky promises that cable could provide. This frightened the broadcasters, telephone companies, movie producers and exhibitors. They had big lobbies and immediately descended on our Congress. The net result was that the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) arbitrarily took over our industry without congressional authority. Most of us were political amateurs, and we were frightened by the massive rules and regulations imposed on us by the FCC. Most of the voluminous rules were overkill and impossible to comply with. Naive and unsophisticated in the art of lobbying, many of us flew back and forth to Washington D. C. like a yo-yo, in what looked like a futile attempt to obtain relief from these FCC shackles. Congress was mostly unsympathetic and had already yielded to the more powerful lobbies. After a long and expensive struggle, the cable industry finally gained some deregulation relief. However, as this is being written in 1993-94, regulation has again reared its ugly head and cable systems and their subscribers are suffering from too much government in our faces.

Most of the very early community antenna systems, including mine, charged \$3.00 per month for one channel. Based on this, could a 40 channel system of today charge \$120.00 per month? Hardly. Recently, complaints of "high" cable rates have gained much publicity. Just here in Arkansas I have seen a lot of "cable bashing" in the media. I believe that cable television is probably the best bargain in America. Though I am retired from cable, I am tired of the adverse publicity. So I expressed my feelings in a letter to Mr. Bob Blount, president of the Arkansas Cable Television Association. Bob felt it important and timely enough to publish my dissertation in a special issue of the association's "Cablegram". Here is a reprint of this:

Cable television is America's best bargain

Jim Y. Davidson

Mr. Davidson is one of the five founders of ACTA in 1956. He was instrumental in organizing the National Cable Television Association and the Community Antenna Television Association. Now semi-retired, he resides in Cabot, Arkansas.

All over the country, the media are bashing cable, primarily because of the basic monthly rate for service. I contend that the cable industry has failed to promote the true value of its service. Demand for cable service has blinded local systems to the need for public relations. Cable television systems, NCTA and CATA as well as the many state and regional cable television associations have failed miserably in educating the public as to the value received by cable subscribers. This (bashing by the media) should be taken seriously and countered with effective promotion of cable and its true value.

I built the first cable system in Arkansas and connected my first paying subscriber in October 1948. I was instru-

mental and active in the founding and organization of both national associations (NCTA and CATA) as well as a number of regional

and state associations, so I was closely involved in the growing pains of cable television. For instance, there was an era when, without congressional authority the cable television industry was taken over by the Federal Communications Commission and almost regulated out of business by insane and unnecessary rules and regulations. This was an example of the awesome power of bureaucracies.

During this period, I was among a number of cable people who rallied and fought for our existence. Spending money I could ill afford, I yo-yoed back and forth to Washington, D.C., talking with anyone in the House or Senate who would listen. I was very naive at first, but I soon learned that politicians and bureaucrats neither said nor did anything unless it was politically expedient. Though we elected them to serve us, I found that they were really our enemy! We were fighting for survival and and most of what we said fell on deaf ears. I wrote hundreds of

letters and telegrams to legislators which made a lot of sense, but their replies made no sense at all. The politicians were influenced by higher powers and lobbyists than cable could muster and their replies provided no relief for our industry at that time.

Cable television is probably the greatest bargain in our country! A family can enjoy 30 or 40 channels of basic cable 24 hours a day for less than the cost of taking the family out to see one movie! But is the industry getting this message out to the public? I think not. The result is that in one Arkansas city subscribers complained so much about the \$16.00 monthly fee that the city floated a \$3.22 million bond issue and overbuilt

the independently owned system. This city now has the very sticky situation of the publicly funded city owned cable system competing with a free

enterprise privately owned cable system. It is confusing at best and I predict that ultimately no one wins.

Taxpayers are dealing with the bond issue which is backed by a "suspended tax" of 6.5 mills. Lawsuits in federal and state courts are on appeal. Rates have been lowered by both systems to \$12.50 for the city owned basic service of 42 channels and \$11.50 for the privately owned system's 41 channel basic package. Competition has forced the monthly rates to an unrealistic low where neither system can be profitable after amortizing the huge capital investment. Media picked up on this and numerous other cities are doing studies to determine the feasibility for municipally owned cable systems that would compete with the private companies.

Typical reported examples of current fees around the state are \$13.50 for 22 channels, \$11.50 for 12 channels, \$16.50 for 27 channels, \$20.50 for 33 channels, \$17.75 for 35 channels,

Cable television is probably the greatest bargain in our country! A family can enjoy 30 or 40 channels of basic cable 24 hours a day for less than the cost of taking the family out to see one movie!

\$23.95 for 39 channels, \$11.50 for 25 channels.

All excellent bargains!

My first cable system had one channel for a \$3.00 monthly fee. Long before satellite technology provided us with almost unlimited channels, only one off-air channel was available in the beginning and reception was poor, often providing snowy and fading pictures. But the demand for television was great and people gladly paid \$3.00 for this one channel. Does this mean that 30 channels of crystal clear television provided with state-of-the-art technology would be worth $30 \times \$3.00$, or \$90.00 per month? Perhaps not, but the value is certainly there.

Approaching the cost of cable with an open mind, one realizes that on a SINGLE channel in 24-hour period one can view with the family in the comfort of home several hundred dollars worth of movies (as compared to going to a movie theater). And this is possible without having to dress and drive from home; and popcorn doesn't cost \$2.00!

Notwithstanding the 24 hour news, sports and other programs, multiply the total number of movies in any month and one will find that each movie costs only pennies! This is the message that the cable industry must promote if it is to survive without the hassle of dealing with uninformed subscribers and municipal governments and federal regulation. I can envision an ad both on cable

channels and in newspapers that states, "Take your family to a movie for 3¢ !!! Last month your cable system provided 565 movies and features for only 3 cents each. You also had a bonus of 24-hour news, sports and other features at no additional charge."

In addition to the many letters and telegrams mentioned above, I wrote and published a number of booklets in an effort to enhance the public image of cable television. Most of these were written in the 1960's when we were fighting for survival. One booklet was titled simply *Public Image*. Another was *Isn't It About Time?* and one was *Community Antenna, The Injustice of a Distorted Image*.

But is the industry getting this message out to the public? I think not.

My purpose was threefold: (1) To educate the public and to improve our image and relations. (2) To educate the politicians and the bureaucrats. (3) To persuade cable system operators to embark on a continuous campaign of public relations ads and policies. I distributed many thousands of these booklets and received so many requests that they had to be reprinted. Legislators requested additional copies. Cable operators requested them in quantities of dozens and hundreds offering to pay for them. Some did send money, but whether they paid or not, I filled all orders. It is this type of PR that has been, in my opinion, lacking within the cable industry and they are now paying

the (penalty) by having to deal with irate customers and city governments.

In most cases the cable subscribers really have nothing to be irate about. If the cable industry had just made politicians and the public aware of what a great bargain cable

There are better ways of dealing with complaints than messy overbuilds by a municipality.

really is, this vexing and costly situation would have been avoided. Media has told everyone so many times that cable rates are too high that the public is believing it.

There are better ways of dealing with complaints than messy overbuilds by a municipality. As Grandma said, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," meaning (in this instance) that proper public relations and education of subscribers and governments would prevent most complaints. Tell them that they are receiving all this variety of television for about 50¢ per channel per month! Tell them that instead of paying \$5.00 and up for a theater ticket, they are enjoying movies in the comfort of their homes for only pennies each!

Get your message out to congress, the public and the media. It costs as much as 20¢ per MINUTE to take a family of four to a movie, while the same 20¢ will buy many hours of viewing and hundreds of viewing choices on cable!

NAOMI TOLER

4582 Downing Drive
Baton Rouge, LA 70809

September 21, 1998

Dear Jimmy,

It has been a real pleasure to keep in touch with you through the years, especially since I now reside in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. My visits with you and your wife in Little Rock brought back many pleasant memories for me. Recalling those simpler, less hectic times in Tuckerman are very special to me and my children and allowing us to be a part of your book will be a real treat for us all.

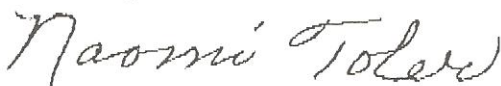
Living in the middle of downtown Tuckerman automatically involved us in many interesting, local events and little did we know that you were making history with television transmission. It was very typical that my late husband Carl Toler, would want to be involved in your project. He was such a go-getter and really ahead of his time, as you have always been.

You have done an outstanding job of documenting your cable story and those facts have made me recall events and activities surrounding those times in the fall 1948. Prior to the cable being connected to our house, I remember how crowds of people would gather in front of the appliance store and watch television through the window after the store had closed for the night. After a few weeks of this, Carl decided we just had to have our own television set. It was a small Philco and what a conversation piece it was. If we knew ahead of time when the test pattern would be shown, Carl would rush home from the Depot to see it.

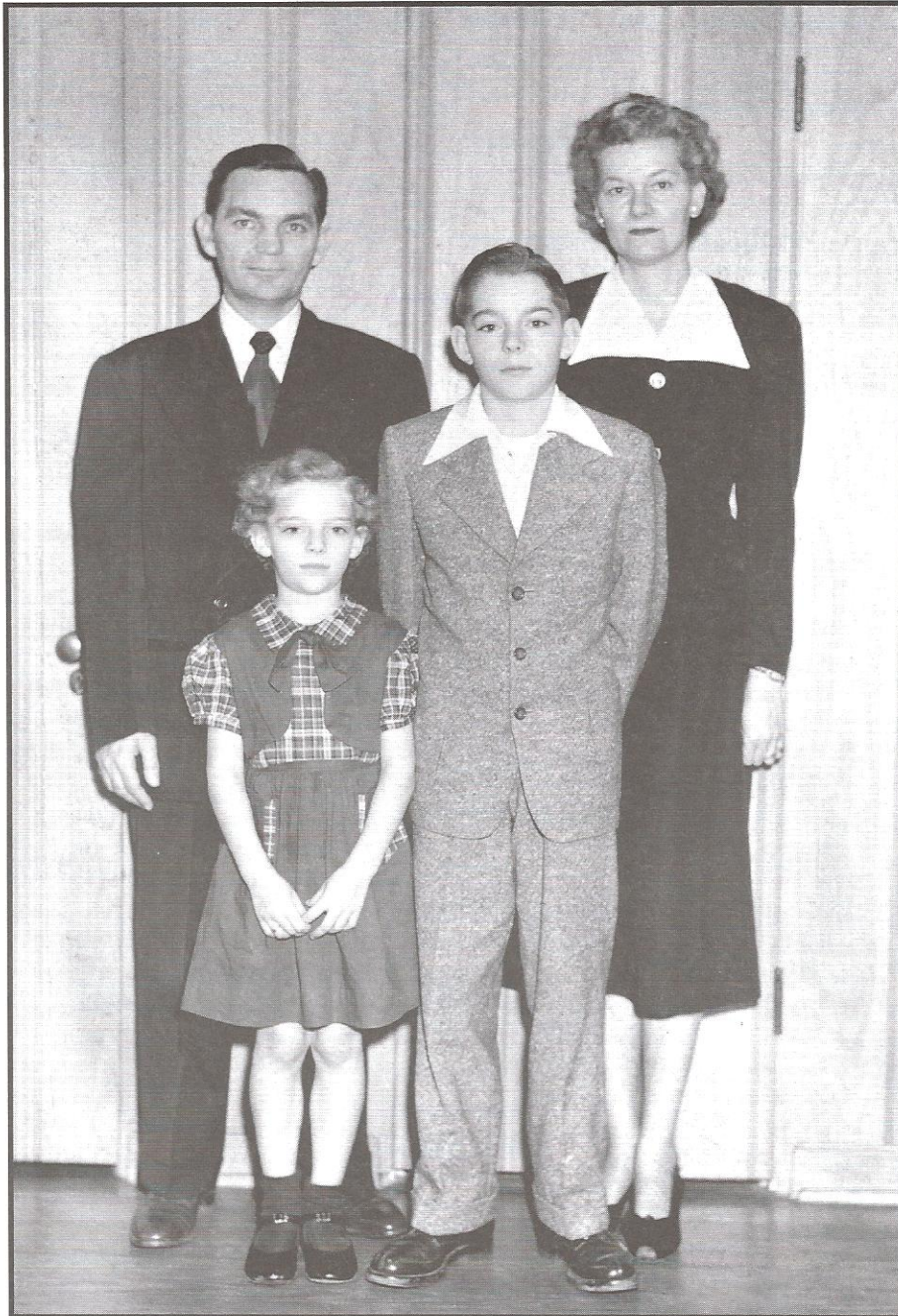
On many occasions, we would invite classmates of my son, Jerry, to come over and watch shows of historical value or programs that would pertain to their schoolwork. Since my daughter, Ruth, was only four years old, she was only interested in the Howdy Doody Show and the many products they were trying to sell the kids. According to our weekly newspaper, the Tuckerman Record, the first live transmission from Memphis was the Tennessee-Ole Miss football game on October 13, 1948. I well recall the crowd of curious friends gathered in our living room and were amazed at the good quality of the picture.

I look forward to seeing you again soon and wish you good luck with your project. If I can be of any further help, please call me.

Best Regards,



Naomi L. Toler
4582 Downing Dr.
Baton Rouge, LA 70809



- FIRST SUBSCRIBERS -

**Carl, Naomi, Ruth and Jerry Toler
at Tuckerman, Arkansas in 1948**

The Toler family subscribed to Jimmy Davidson's experimental community antenna system in Tuckerman, Arkansas, from October, 1948 until they moved to another city in 1953. This makes Mr. & Mrs. Carl Toler Arkansas' first cable subscriber, one of the first in the world.

LOUIS FRENCH
Box 474
Tuckerman, AR 72473

October 9, 1989

J. Y. Davidson
P. O. Box 1053
Cabot, AR 72023

Dear Jimmy,

It was so nice to visit with you on the telephone today, you brought back memories of days when life was a lot simpler.

I was reminiscing with my 89 year old Mother about the time we put up the tower on the old Smith Building and erected antennas and amplifiers (that you had built), in order to receive the one Television Station in Memphis, Tennessee.

I did not realize, until now, that at the time my Mother had positioned a chair at her home in a way that she could watch us all day. She told me that late in the day when my Father arrived home for his evening meal, she told him, I'm not cooking a damn thing until that boy comes down off that tower.

It was soon after that, about October 1948, that you and I installed a coaxial cable across the top of the Smith Building, down to the town's one traffic light cable, across the street to the "New Theator" building and then to a wild cherry tree and from there to Carl Tolers house. I believe we charged Carl about the price of a roof-top antenna job which was about \$150.00 plus a monthly fee of \$3.00.

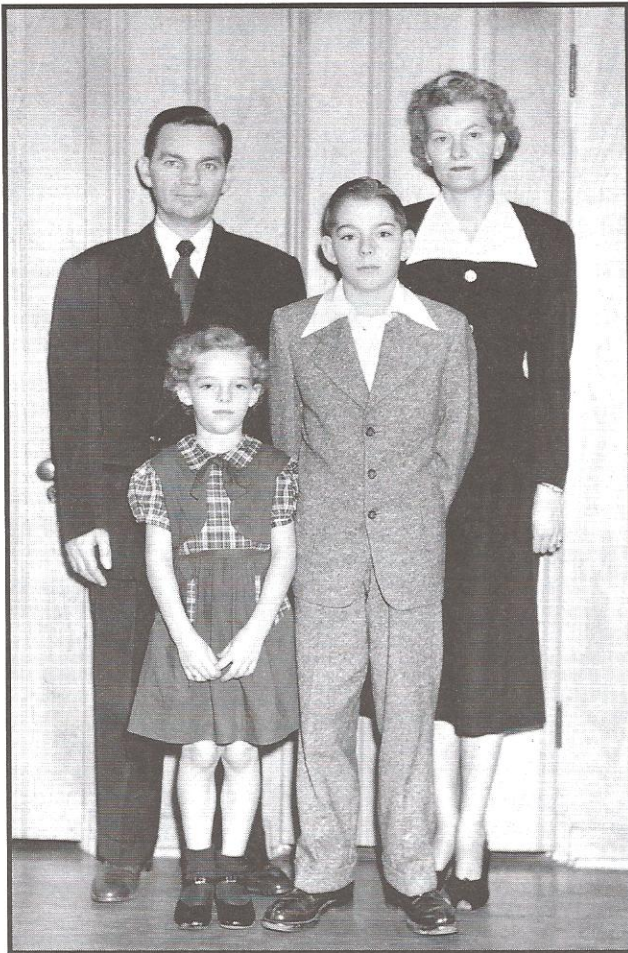
We were not sure it would work, running it that distance, but as Carl said, he had the best T.V. reception and the most company of any one in town.

Jimmy you have always been a dear friend to me, and I look forward to seeing you soon.

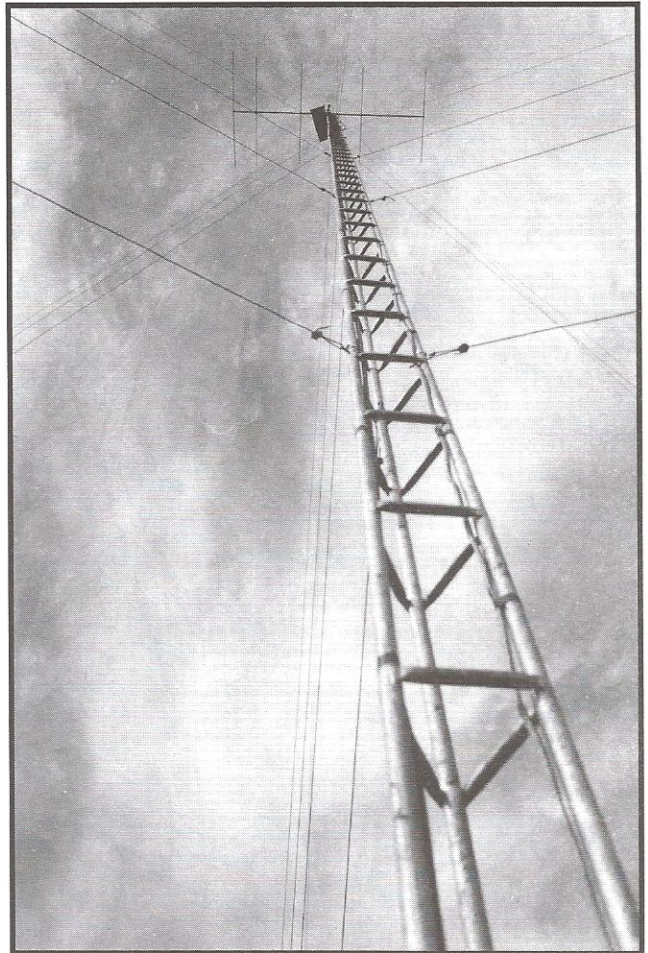
Yours very truly,

Louis French
Louis French

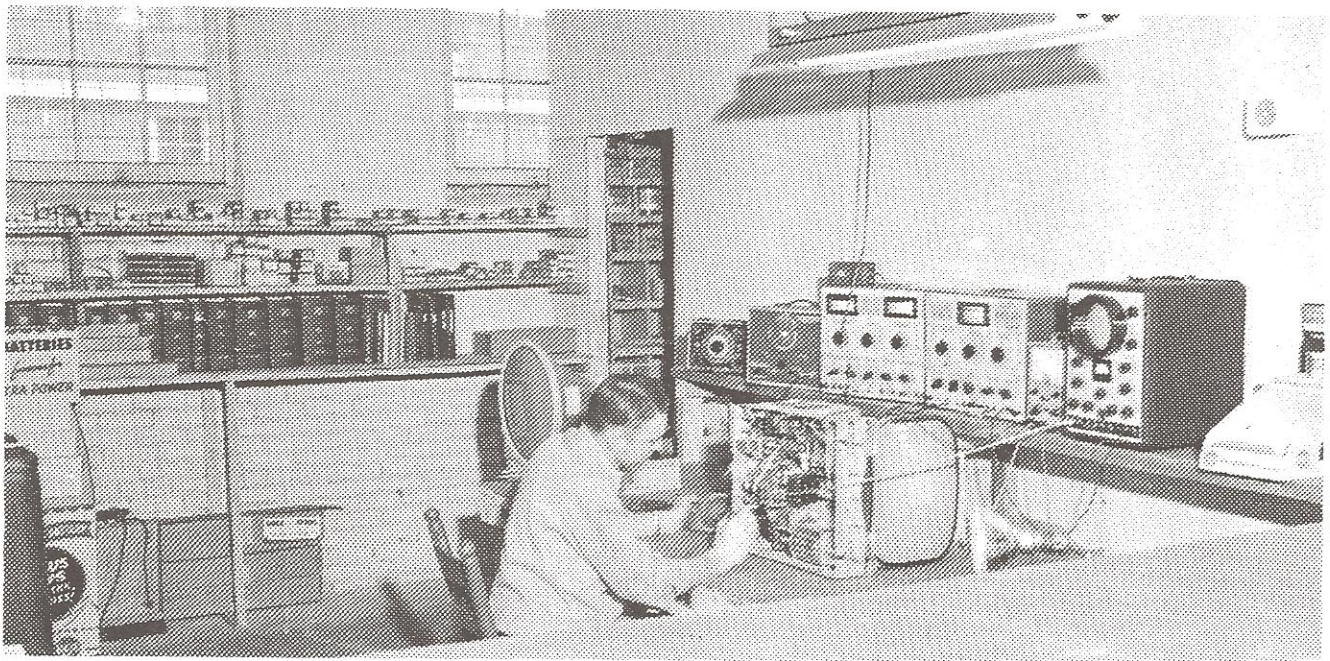
Louis French and I were both very young men back in the late 40's. Louis was my key employee, a very fine young man back then and still is. After I left there and moved to Batesville, Louis became a popular mayor of Tuckerman for 12 consecutive years. - JYD



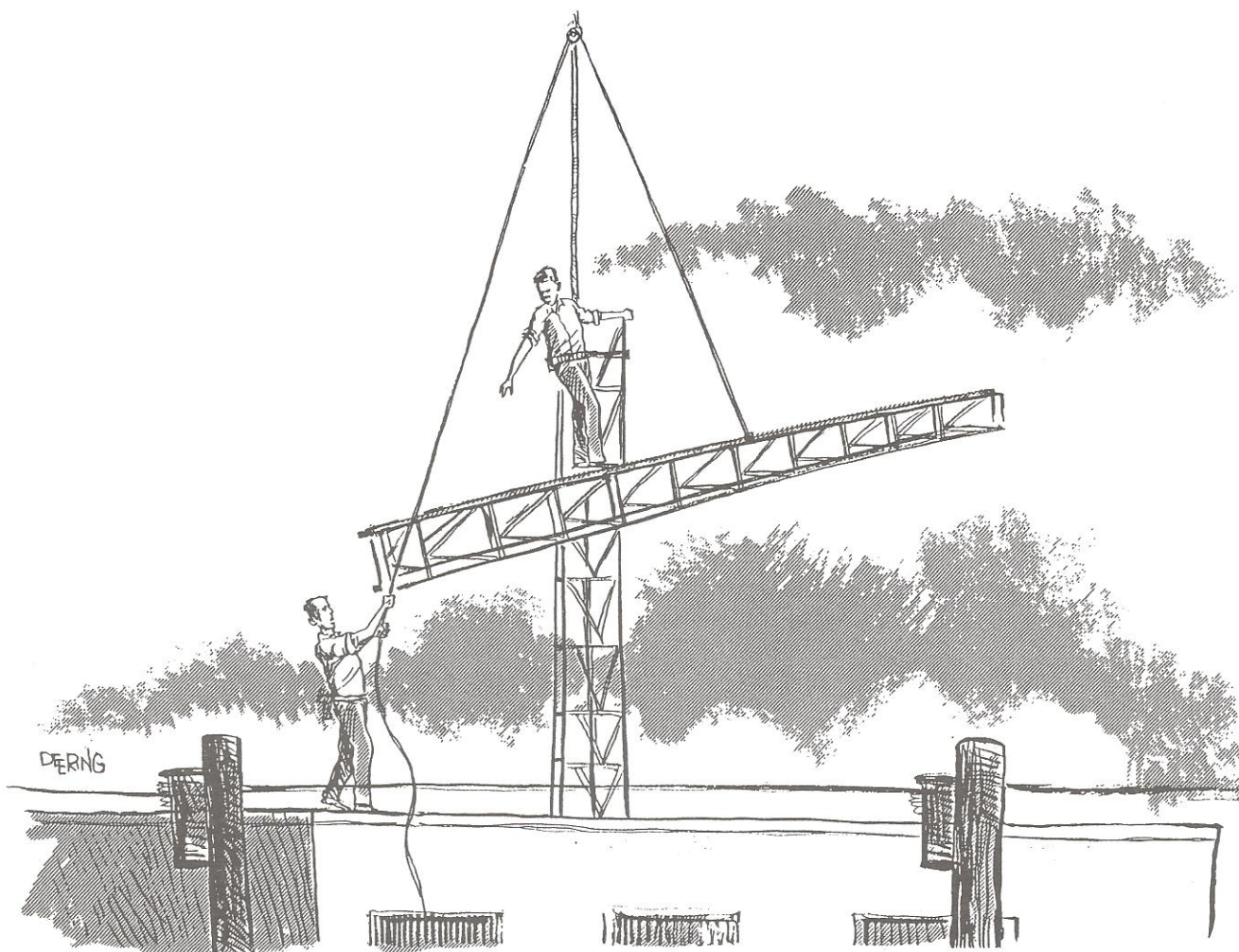
Arkansas' first subscriber, the Carl Toler family - October, 1948



From this tower Jimmy Davidson built his first experimental cable system.

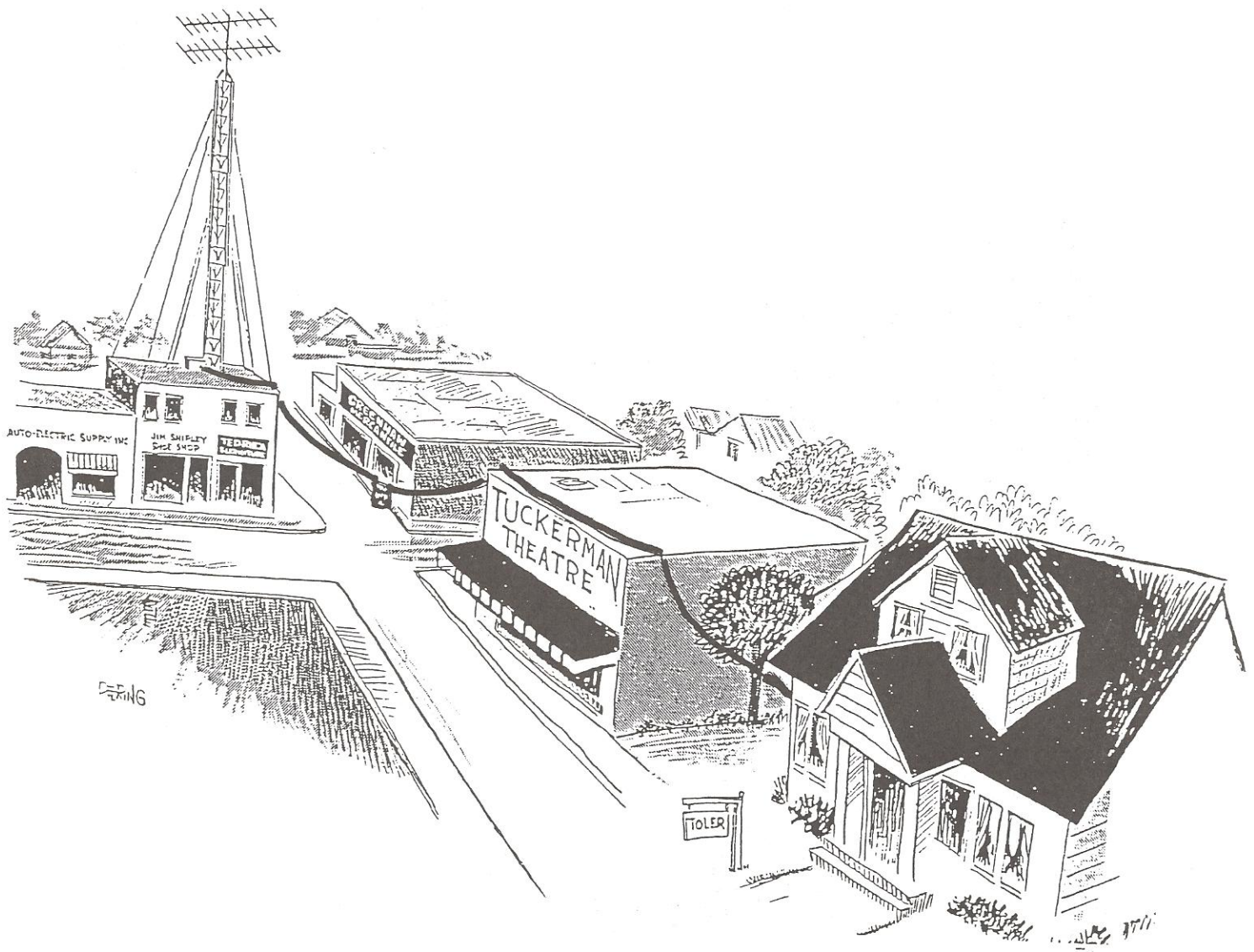


Jimmy's radio and television repair shop as it was in 1948 when he built the 100 foot tower shown above and connected his first paying subscriber. His first television set was a 7" Motorola. The TV set he is working on appears to be a 17" Hallicrafter.



Davidson and his key assistant, Louis French, had no previous tower construction experience. It's a miracle that they survived the installation. The illustration above shown the two young men raising the second section of the tower. Should it have gotten away from them there was the possibility of it contacting the nearby power lines which could have proven a disaster. However, they did complete the installation successfully.

Davidson and French installed this tower in mid-1948 simultaneously with the construction of WMCT's transmitting tower in Memphis, Tennessee.



The above illustration shows how the coaxial cable drop reached the Toler home. From the top of Davidson's tower the cable connected to an amplifier at the tower base. Leaving the two-story Smith building, the cable was attached to Tuckerman's only traffic light on highway 67. From there it was draped across the Tuckerman Theatre, thence to a large cherry tree and finally into the Toler living room. The Toler home is still there and occupied, but the Smith building and Tuckerman Theater are long gone.

- JIMMY'S FIRST SUBSCRIBER -



Left to right: Louis French, Davidson's first cable employee, Naomi Toler, Davidson's first cable subscriber in October 1948 and Jimmy Davidson. Photo Made in 1991.



Jimmy Davidson and Louis French pose in front of Davidson's 1st cable customer hook-up, the Carl and Naomi Toler home, still standing today, 50 years later.

THE TUCKERMAN RECORD
Tuckerman, Arkansas
NOVEMBER 18, 1948

*(The following article was at the top of
this weekly newspaper's front page)*

First Television Here on Saturday, November 13, 1948

Tuckerman's first television program was received here Saturday and was made visible to the public through the courtesy of Jimmy Davidson at Auto-Electric Company who installed a television set in the Legion Hut and invited the public to see it.

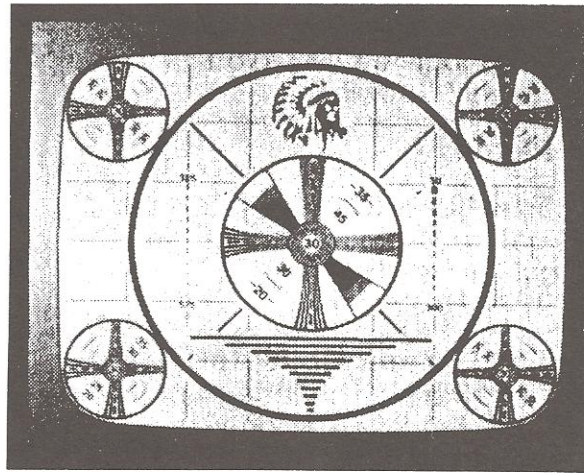
The program was a trial broadcast of the Tennessee-Ole Miss football game from Memphis and while the reception was not clear at all times those witnessing the broadcast could get the idea of what the real thing will be like when the 'bugs' are worked out for this section.

Addendum by Jimmy Davidson: I clearly remember this day as it was a big event for Tuckerman, Arkansas. Owner/editor John Parrott of the weekly newspaper "The Tuckerman Record" covered the event. The American Legion building was filled with standing room only as was the television display area at Auto-Electric. The Carl Toler family also had a full living room and this telecast kept Louis French and myself hopping between all three places trying to keep all of the television sets adjusted.

At the time none of us realized that we were making history since the Tolers had become Arkansas' first cable subscriber, one of the first in the world, and little did we realize the extent to which cable television would grow.

THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

Memphis, Tennessee
JANUARY 7, 1949



NOTE THAT BACK IN 1948 AND 1949,
OUR SINGLE CHANNEL BROADCAST
ONLY 3½ HOURS OF PROGRAMMING
DAILY. IT WAS ON UP IN THE FIFTIES
BEFORE PROGRAMMING WAS EXTENDED.

WMCT Television Time Table

The Commercial Appeal Station

(WMCT will telecast its test pattern from 10 to 12 this morning and from 1 to 5 this afternoon for the testing of receiving sets.)

6:15 p. m. Test pattern.

6:30 p. m. Program Resume and music.

6:35 p. m. Howdy Doody.

7:05 p. m. "Spring Antics," cartoon.

7:15 p. m. WMCT Newsreel.

7:30 p. m. Steps to Stardom.

8 p. m. Slim Rhodes and his Mountaineers.

8:30 p. m. Football (bowl games).

9 p. m. To be announced.

9:30 p. m. Charley Sullivan's Sports Reel with Walter Stewart.

9:45 p. m. Film featurette.

10 p. m. Sign off.

DAVIDSON'S FIRSTS IN CABLE TV

As stated in my speech, after hooking up the Toler's, I started looking for a larger city and chose Batesville which is located about 40 miles west of Tuckerman. Despite the pitfalls of pioneering, the Batesville cable system has been an outstanding success. Several years later we went back and installed a complete system in Tuckerman as well as many other Arkansas cities.

From October, 1948, the Toler's continued subscribing to this original mini-system in Tuckerman until they moved in 1953. A heart attack took Carl Toler's life in 1963 at age 52. He is survived by his wife, Naomi who is now retired. He is also survived by a son, Jerry, a daughter, Ruth, four grandchildren and one great grandchild.

In addition to documenting my first subscriber and some cable history as it relates to Arkansas, the following is a list of firsts to which I lay claim. I was blessed to be at the right place at the right time and to have had the opportunity to function in a free society that encouraged and rewarded achievement.

- 0 -

1. ARKANSAS' FIRST EXPERIMENTAL CABLE SYSTEM

In Tuckerman, Arkansas I designed and built Arkansas' first experimental cable system beginning in mid 1948. My first and only employee at that time was Louis French, who later became mayor of Tuckerman. This system had a total of 19 outlets. Actually, we called it a "Community Antenna System" in the early days and I believe it was around 1960 when the name was changed to "Cable TV".

2. ARKANSAS' FIRST PAYING SUBSCRIBER

The Carl Toler family was my first paying subscriber, having hooked up to my experimental system in October, 1948. They paid me \$150 for the installation plus \$3.00 per month and stayed on this one-channel system until moving out of town in 1953. They moved to Newport, Arkansas and subscribed to my cable system there.

3. FIRST MUNICIPAL FRANCHISE ISSUED IN THE STATE OF ARKANSAS

From the City of Batesville I obtained the first municipal franchise issued in the State of Arkansas for the purpose of building a cable television system. I began testing for signals in 1949 on seven different hilltops in the Batesville area. At that point in time everyone was hungry for television so I was welcomed by a receptive city council. I did this testing utilizing yagi antenna arrays on a portable tower, several existing towers and even a futile attempt at using unwieldy barrage balloons. Needless to say this testing received publicity and I usually had crowds of curious onlookers. As years passed, franchising became more competitive and city governments more demanding. I later obtained many franchises for myself and for my customers. The most difficult franchise I ever obtained was several years later at Helena and West Helena, Arkansas. This story is fully documented in another of my publications.

4. ARKANSAS' FIRST CABLE SYSTEM

Beginning in 1949 it took me several years to complete the Batesville system. Good equipment was nonexistent and I resorted to apartment house amplifiers manufactured by Jerrold Electronics and Blonder Tongue and actually manufactured some of my equipment, all of which was primitive by today's standards and left a lot to be desired. I had to use war surplus coaxial cable which was RG-11 and RG-59, and not the best quality for cable television. With the advent of multiple channels in forthcoming years cable manufactures produced much better coaxial cable. During the first few years my work in Batesville created a lot of media and word-of-mouth attention, causing me to have hoards of visitors from far and wide. In retrospect, I wish I had kept a log of these would-be cable entrepreneurs. Most, if not all, soon started their own cable systems. They came by auto and by airplane. After building their own systems, many of my visitors later became active in trade associations and industry affairs, and most became my customers. I recall one day when a Lincoln drove out to my antenna site with four well dressed gentlemen from Northwest Arkansas. They were Fred Stevenson and Rip Lndsay from Fayetteville, Don Thompson from Rogers and Bob Wheeler from Harrison, all in the radio broadcasting business. After looking over my system and obtaining information from me, they all soon started cable systems in their cities. They became customers of my company and I did a turnkey construction of the Rogers system where I designed and built my second Rhombic antenna.

In the early days we all suffered the pitfalls of pioneering, and had many technical and financial obstacles to overcome. My Batesville system, along with all our others that my son, Jamie, and I ultimately constructed are all doing quite well.

Despite the fact that only one channel was available and pictures were sometimes lacking in quality, demand for hookups was overwhelming.

5. FIRST AP&L JOINT USE AGREEMENT

I obtained the first joint-use pole attachment agreement ever issued by Arkansas Power & Light Company (Middle South Utilities) anywhere within its network. It was relatively easy to obtain because of my friendship with AP&L's CEO, C. Hamilton Moses who helped pave the way to expedite this agreement.

6. FIRST SWB JOINT USE AGREEMENT

I obtained the first joint-use pole attachment agreement with Southwestern Bell Telephone Company. This one was not so easy and I spent months in meetings and negotiations with both their Little Rock office and their St. Louis headquarters. This was the first joint-use pole agreement ever issued by this Bell Telephone Company anywhere within its vast coverage area. Like AP&L, they had never heard of community antenna systems and were very cautious about a new upstart like me attaching anything to their poles.

7. FIRST RHOMBIC ANTENNA FOR CATV

In my effort to improve the weak picture I was receiving from the lone television station, WMCT in Memphis, Tennessee, I was ready to try anything. The station

was 114 miles distant and picture quality was often very poor on quad 10-element yagi antenna arrays. So, I designed and constructed what, to the best of my knowledge, was the very first rhombic antenna that was specifically for cable television. (Rhombic antennas had previously been used by the military and long-distance communications companies for radio messages.) I located my first rhombic antenna on Ruddle Hill just southwest of Batesville. It consisted of a massive antennae array supported by four steel towers and covered several acres. I am presently having small models of this massive rhombic antenna array constructed for display at the National Cable Center and Museum at the University of Denver in Denver and one for the Old Independence Regional Museum at Batesville, Arkansas. I subsequently designed and constructed several of these monster antennae for other cable systems, including Rogers, Arkansas and West Plains, Missouri.

8. FIRST CATV SUPERMARKET

My company, DAVCO Electronics Corporation, was the very first full-line distributorship and construction company for cable television equipment and supplies. I initially operated it under my existing corporation, "Community Antenna Co., Inc.," but its rapid growth made it necessary to separate it from our cable system operations. Pronounced "Dave-Co," it is short for "Davidson Company." At DAVCO, we furnished everything from the top of the tower to the subscriber's TV set, including engineering, manufacturing and turnkey construction of cable systems. I ran full-page color ads nationally, and called my company the "CATV Supermarket." DAVCO soon had many employees and crews. We had so many thousands of items in stock that our catalog consisted of four 3" binders. They were bright orange in color and imprinted with our DAVCO logo. These popular catalogs were the "bible" of cable systems all over the country and each day we shipped electronic equipment, coaxial cable, tools, test equipment and supplies to customers in all of the 48 contiguous states, as well as a hand full of customers in Hawaii, Alaska and Mexico. Our construction division would be building turnkey cable systems in as many as five states simultaneously. A number of suppliers and construction companies soon followed, but I go on record as stating that Batesville's DAVCO Electronics was the undisputed first of its kind. Being active in various associations, we had a DAVCO exhibit at many conventions which were very popular. I would usually fly our exhibit and equipment in our twin engine airplane to the convention site, along with personnel from DAVCO to man the exhibit. We all dressed in red jackets that had our DAVCO logo on them.

9. FUNCTIONAL DESIGN HEAD-END

Many early cable entrepreneurs built their own systems without professional help which resulted in poor construction and sometimes very poor head ends. I saw the need for developing a better head end and developed a basic design which was not only good in appearance but it worked well, better than anything else on the market at that time. I called it my "Functional Design Head-End." Though I used the same basic design for each head end, they had different characteristics, depending on the available channels, interference and other factors at the particular system. I would do an engineering analysis for each location, draw up a layout and begin production. The DAVCO Electronics lab subsequently put many of these "functional design head-ends" together for cable systems over a wide area of the country. It was not unusual for me to put this sophisticated, custom designed assembly in my airplane, deliver and install it in a cable system as far away as Florida and return to our Batesville headquarters the same day.

I ran full page color ads in all of the cable television publications and developed an enviable number of loyal cable television customers.

In the mid-50's when competitive engineers, manufacturers and suppliers adamantly stated that it was impossible to put more than three channels on a cable system I was routinely building 5-channel head ends primarily using equipment manufactured by Entron in Bladensburg, Maryland. I was able to avoid adjacent channel interference by the careful alignment of high-Q traps and filters. This was done in our laboratory with sweep and marker generators and an oscilloscope. Incidentally, we were appointed the national distributor for Entron products.

10. CLOSED-CIRCUIT CABLECAST

I furnished the cameras and equipment and helped Don Thompson and Leon McAuliff with what may have been the first closed circuit cablecast. It was on their Rogers, Arkansas cable system on October 16, 1956. I had just completed the turnkey construction of this early Arkansas cable system. This event was covered in the Arkansas Association publication and a copy is in this package of materials.

11. FIRST CORPORATE AIRCRAFT

I was first in Batesville to utilize a corporate aircraft full-time for business purposes. Back in the late 40's and early 50's Batesville had only one short north-south runway which was muddy following a rain. Many times I would land at Batesville in the middle of the night after landing in four or five different states where I had turnkey construction jobs in progress. At this time the small Batesville airport had a few runway light and many times I landed when no more than a dozen lights would be on. As I recall, Leonard Wolford and Ervin Reves had the only other airplanes in Batesville at the time. They were small single engine airplanes that Leonard used primarily for student instruction and pleasure travel. I had the only twin engine airplane based in Batesville at that time. Of course, time has proven the value of aviation to Batesville and other smaller cities, and Batesville now boasts a modern airport facility with two paved runways, navigation equipment and a terminal building in which my name is on a plaque as having been a contributor in the expansion and modernization of this airport. As this is being written in 1998, many private and corporate aircraft, including jets, are based at the Batesville Municipal Airport. It also has a jet maintenance facility.

During my cable years, I purchased a series of eight airplanes that I flew day and night to sell and service our own and our customer's cable systems. I just completed 52 years of flying and recently grounded myself due to health problems and constraints of time and sold our last twin engine airplane. My airplanes may well have been the most important tools in our cable business since I logged approximately 17,000 hours during my 52 years. I do not claim to be first to use an aircraft in the cable television industry, but I may well have been. Others in cable subsequently started using airplanes. Those that I personally knew and that readily come to mind include, Bill Daniels of Denver, Colorado; Warren Fibley of Pen Yan, New York; J. E. Wolfe of Cleveland, Mississippi; Vern Coolege of Hattiesburg, Mississippi; Bruce Merrill of Phoenix, Arizona; Larry Boggs and George Milner of the Vumore systems in Oklahoma and Rudy Riley of Drew, Mississippi. There were others, and the February,

1967 issue of TV Communications Magazine reported a total of 306 cable operators who utilized their own aircraft in their cable television operations.

12. AT THE FIRST NCTA MEETING

I was one of a handful who attended the first organizational meeting of the National Cable Television Association at the Necho Allen Hotel in Pottsville, Pennsylvania on January 16, 1952. I felt like an outsider because the few that were there were mostly from the Panther Valley Region of Pennsylvania and all knew each other. I was reluctant to join NCTA at that time since, in my mind, I was not certain of its future. A year later I realized that these original organizers were serious and so I joined NCTA at that time. I later served on the board of directors, and as chairman of a committee of this national association. I was always active in national affairs, especially public relations and lobbying. Some years later, when over-regulation threatened our industry, I joined other cable operators who wrote many letters and sent many telegrams to elected officials. I also traveled extensively on behalf of our association and the cable television industry.

NCTA is 46 years old this year, 1998. To further document my activities in NCTA and other associations, I am reproducing here the first page of a letter from the late George Barco, which I proudly and humbly cherish. At the time it was written, in 1974, it was confidential, but years later the late Polly Dunn of Columbus, Mississippi gave me a copy.

13. CALLED ORGANIZATIONAL CATA MEETING

In 1973, I was appointed director of the NCTA Small Systems Board. This was at a time when many small system operators were very disgruntled with NCTA and were dropping out of the association. I talked with many who were inclined to start up a new association just for the smaller systems. So, I called a meeting at the Marriott Hotel in Dallas, Texas on July 23, 1973 to organize a new national association which we named "Community Antenna Television Association" (CATA), to represent the small system operators. My wife, Janet Marie, was invaluable in helping me contact cable operators by phone and telegram for this hastily called meeting. One of the primary complaints the small system operators had with NCTA was that they thought the association was looking after the needs of the big "multiple systems operators" (MSOs) and neglecting the needs of the small system operator. One of our assertions was that we were not "CABLE systems", we were still "COMMUNITY antenna systems." As with NCTA, this association is alive and well today, serving the needs of a great segment of the cable television industry. Few may recall this, but following a discussion of what to call the new association, I take credit for the name. There were many suggestions, but I took the floor and suggested that since this group was self declared as "community," why don't we name it "Community Antenna Television Association," having an easy acronym, "CATA." My suggestion was readily adopted. I have lost touch with most of the early founders of CATA, but recall that Kyle Moore of Oklahoma, John Campbell and Hurshel Tyler both of Texas were among those who were a positive force in this new association. CATA quickly became the second national association.

CATA will be 25 years old in July, 1998. When we formed this association, a 12 channel system was the ultimate, but many systems still operated with only 3 channels. Satellite technology was just budding, and we were still using tall towers, huge yagi arrays and rhombic antennae. We still used tubes in

our amplifiers. We didn't dream that "mom and pop" systems would soon be bought by the big MSOs at outlandish prices. Of course, we all know that technology has produced extremely reliable solid-state equipment and that, thanks to satellite technology, we no longer have to build a huge rhombic antenna that covers several acres in order to receive just one channel. Again, thanks to current technology cable systems have an almost unlimited channel capacity. We now have high-power satellites that will deliver up to 150 channels direct to homes with a small 18" dish. The impact of these small dishes has been significant but not too detrimental to cable systems yet. I recently talked to a multiple system CEO who told me that they had lost about 2% of their subscribers to the small dishes. However, he added that their gains far offset the 2% loss.

14. OZARK CATV ASSOCIATION

In 1959, I called a meeting which was held near Harrison, Arkansas, to organize the Ozark Regional Association, the area's first cable TV association. I called and sent invitations out to operators of community antenna systems in Arkansas and Missouri, all located in the Ozark Mountain area. I had been involved in the start-up and building of most of these systems. We held the meeting in the lakefront home of the late Bob Wheeler of Harrison, Arkansas.

15. STATE & REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Of course, as the number of systems grew, individual state and regional associations were organized. This first area association was the forerunner of the Arkansas Cable Association, the Missouri Cable Association, Mississippi Association, South Central Association and the Southern associations. I am proud to have been instrumental in the organization of all of these state and regional associations.

My files contain historical details of these associations. Attached are copies of two pages from the late Polly Dunn which give some significant historical dates of these state and regional associations.

For years, at its annual meeting, the Arkansas Cable Television Association presented the "J. Y. Davidson" award and plaque to some deserving person in the cable business for their outstanding contribution to the cable industry. Association president Bob Blount called and asked me to come to the 1986 meeting and personally present the award.

In June of 1987, the Mississippi Cable Television Association contacted me asking if I would be their guest speaker at their annual meeting to be held in July, 1987. Since I had been active in the formation of this association and had done the initial engineering for the cable systems at Biloxi and along the Gulf Coast, I was glad to visit the area, again. As a matter of fact, we probably built more systems in Mississippi than any other state. During the 50's and 60's I personally knew practically all Mississippi system operators.

We always enjoy the Mississippi Gulf Coast and it has always been a favorite destination for my wife and me. We have spent a lot of time there, keeping several yachts at the Broadwater Beach Marina. Also, I was there when Hurricane Camille was approaching and flew my airplane out of there just before Camille hit on August 18, 1969. I returned as soon as Camille had safely passed and was saddened by the enormous damage to property and loss of life.

We always enjoy visiting with old friends at the Mississippi Cable Association's annual meeting. Reproduced here is a copy of my speech at the 1987 Mississippi Association meeting. I have also inserted several photos and a copy of the program. The Mississippi folks always invite us to their annual meetings and we attend if possible.

Jumping ahead seven years from this 1987 Mississippi meeting, Janet and I attended the June 9, 1994 Mississippi meeting at Biloxi. For historical interest I am adding a few photos and a copy of the program.

So, here we are in 1998, 50 years after I connected the Carl Toler family to my small experimental cable system in October, 1948 in Tuckerman, Arkansas. It has been a quantum leap from cable television's meager beginnings in the late 40's and early 50's to the 40 and 50 channels cable brings into homes today. Now, much media attention is being given to "interactive cable" and cable's "superhighway" with several hundred channels, two-way television and a plethora of services too numerous to mention here. Time will tell how far technology will go and its effect on society.

Everyone has been teased by the media with in-depth features on new technologies (the "interactive info super highway") and what it will mean to the eagerly awaiting cable subscriber who evidently has forgotten that there's only 24 hours in a day. Even a confirmed couch-potato could not watch all the TV that is offered.

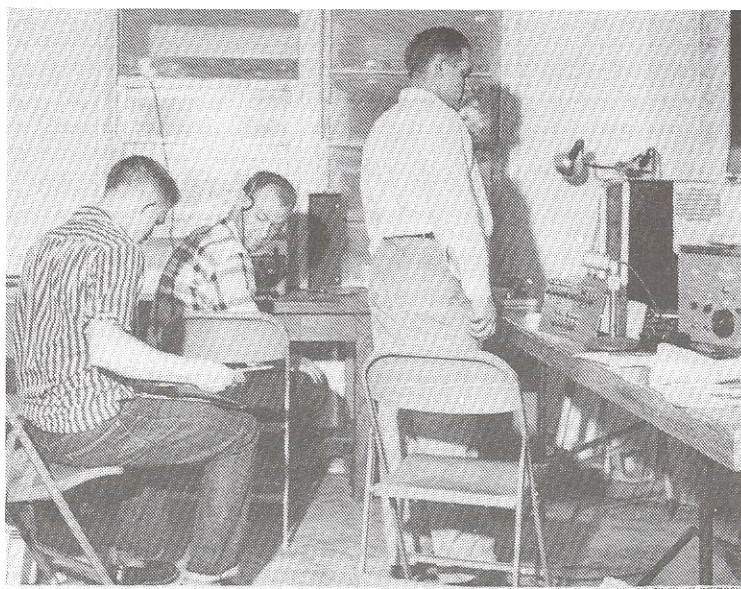
During the era of "community antenna", before it was called "cable", television broadcasters welcomed us because we were extending their coverage and improving their pictures in fringe areas. I have a file full of interesting letters from grateful television broadcasters and will be publishing them. My, how things can change. Following this, we went through a period when our industry was fighting for its life under threats from these same broadcasters, who were joined by movie producers, theatres, telephone companies and others who were afraid of being put out of business by cable television. Congress and the FCC were threatening us then, and still are today. Movie producers have joined the cable industry to a great extent, and many cable only producers and networks have sprung up.

So, from our meager beginnings 50 years ago, we have grown beyond our wildest imaginations. Cable has become a "zillion" dollar industry, with gross annual revenues as well as merger deals in the billions of dollars.

I am proud of my part in the implementation and growth of this industry. From my first 7" black and white television set in 1948, to our 60" color set presently in our home. I wonder what the cable television industry will be like another 50 years from now?

Some years ago we began divesting ourselves of our cable properties. Quite frankly, I am glad to be out of the business since it has changed so dramatically and is no longer the pioneering challenge as when I started. However, I do try to stay abreast of what's going on in the cable industry.

This is just one of several publications I am working on. I have many rare photos and other items which will be incorporated into future publications.



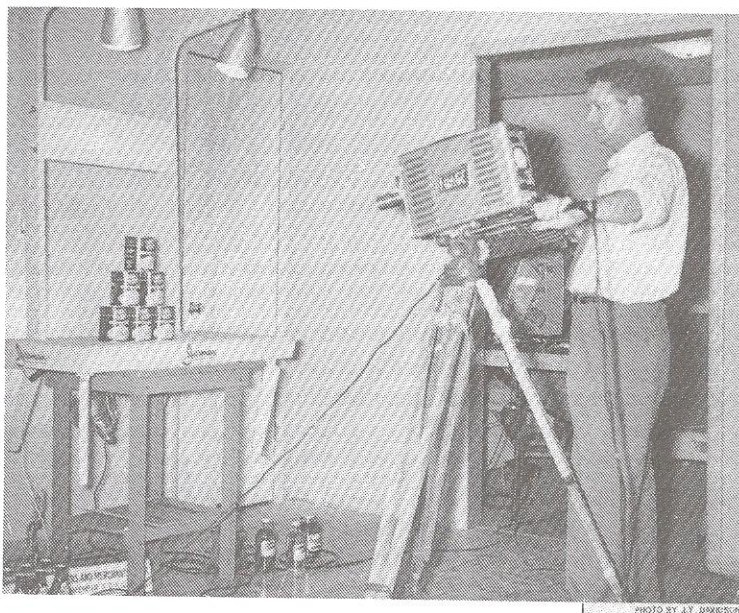
At left is Don Thompson (standing) in the "control room" directing the action through the open door into the "studio."

It's October 16, 1956, as KAMO-vision goes "on the air" with its first closed circuit cablecast from Thompson's garage in Rogers, Arkansas. This may have been the first production of this type in the country.

Thompson had arrived from Tulsa, Oklahoma, as owner of radio station KAMO and saw the great potential in the future of cable television.

Ad insertion was no problem in 1956 as there were plenty of avails on this first local access channel. They even did a game show (*Eat your heart out, Jeopardy*) on a set furnished from Thompson's living room with on-air talent from KAMO. Instead of inserting tapes, they simply restacked the table with new products waiting on the floor.

Jim Davidson, designer, supplier and engineer, operates the camera in the photo at right.



In the photo at left, Wayne Reddick holds the station logo card in front of the high tech lights.

About the only thing solid-state about that camera was its case.

Studio cooling was accomplished by leaving the garage doors open.

The Arkansas Cable Television Association owes much to cable pioneers like Thompson and Davidson. They were among the entrepreneurs who risked their time and capital to found an industry that changed forever the electronic news and entertainment industry.

"Jimmy" Y. Davidson Recalls the Beginning of Cable

"I cannot give you the exact date that I connected my first paying subscriber but it was in October 1948 when WMCT in Memphis started transmitting test patterns and experimental broadcasts. My first subscriber was Carl Toler who passed away in 1963 at age 52. We are still in contact with his wife who clearly remembers watching our one-channel."



The fascinating correspondence of Jim Y. Davidson, Cabot, Arkansas, with Stanley M. Searle, has added additional historical perspectives to the holdings of the Cable Center Library. The correspondence included a chronology of his activities in cable, beginning in 1948, and an expanded narrative in the form of an address by Mr. Davidson at the Arkansas Cable Television Association Annual Meeting, March 6, 1986.

Mr. Davidson began his career with an experimental cable system in Tuckerman, Arkansas where the Toler family "paid me \$3.00 per month and stayed on this one-channel system until moving out

of town in 1953." He then moved on to Batesville, obtained the first municipal cable franchise issued in Arkansas, and expanded his cable operations elsewhere.

Later Mr. Davidson founded DAVCO, an engineering, supply and construction company. "I believe DAVCO to be the first full-line supplier of cable equipment in the world", he wrote Mr. Searle.

Mr. Davidson also wrote about illness, which led to recent long-term hospitalization. He wrote Mr. Searle that he is back home and expects to be fully recovered in two or three months. Mr. Searle and The Cable Center are planning a visit to his home to talk about his large and significant collection of cable's history and its relationship to The Center.

Mr. Davidson can be reached at his mailing address, P. O. Box 1053, Cabot, Arkansas 72023. His facsimile number is 501/843-6226. His telephone number is 501/843-6226.



With the founding of DAVCO, a cable equipment supplier, Mr. Davidson added to his cable enterprise by using his love of flying to deliver equipment to "far away cable systems" and conduct a charter business. He's shown here with one of his early planes and a load of DAVCO equipment. Davidson was still flying in 1995, holding commercial, instrument and multi-engine licenses.



"Ike" and Lois Blonder were familiar figures at cable and broadcasting meetings, as in this 1964 photograph from the Cable Center Library Collections. They attended the 1997 NCTA/Cable Center Academic Seminar in New Orleans and reminisced with staff of The Cable Center. Isaac S. Blonder became Chairman Emeritus in 1989 of Blonder-Tongue, a company he co-founded in 1950 as Blonder-Tongue Laboratories, Inc., which went on to gain national and international attention as a manufacturer of television cameras, monitors, antennas, STV, CATV, and MATV amplifiers and modulators. Today he is active as president of Blonder Broadcasting Corp., which owns experimental television channels WEXP-TV 27 and 28 in Hoboken, NJ. He also serves as special assistant on HDTV to the president of Stevens Institute of Technology.

And in 1951 at the Necho-Allen Hotel in Pottsville....



At the call of Martin Malarkey (dec.) and Robert J. Tarlton, '66, cable operators from all over the country met to respond to an IRS ruling that Mr. Tarlton's cable system must pay federal excise taxes as a "leased wire service". The group decided to organize as a national policy voice for cable television and called itself the National Community Antenna Council. It was later called an Association and still later was moved to Washington, D. C. and named the National Cable Television Association. Mr. Malarkey served as Chairman of its Board 1951-1956.

How many of the faces can you identify? That's Joseph S. Gans, Sr., fourth from the left, front row.



Caption of cartoon at left

By J. Y. Davidson

In the 1960's and 1970's the FCC, (Federal Communications Commission) without congressional authority, assumed jurisdiction over the cable industry. They hired a team of lawyers and aides and came up with rules and regulations that were impossible to comply with and were crippling our industry. I yo-yoed back and forth to Washington National Airport in my airplane many times, walking the halls of Congress in an attempt to stop or ease these regulations. I soon learned how naive I was about politics! I was not alone, most everyone in the cable industry joined in this effort.

During this period I wrote and published many publication which I distributed widely, free of charge, throughout the cable industry and to every congressman and senator in Washington. One of my booklets, "Community Antenna, the Injustice of a Distorted Image," was very popular and I received so many request for thousands of copies that I had to reprint the booklet several times in order to supply the demand. The last of these booklets I have is the fourth printing which is dated November 4, 1974.

Shown at left is a cartoon that I drew which shows me on my way to Washington with a copy of my booklet in hand.

AT NCTA ...

**OUR STAFF
AND
OUR NEW SMALL SYSTEMS BOARD
ARE
DOING A LOT
IN
YOUR BEHALF**

**BUT
WE
NEED
YOU**

**JOIN THE MANY SMALL SYSTEMS WHO
ARE NOW COMING INTO YOUR NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION.**

**WE NEED YOUR VOICE!
WE WILL LISTEN!
AND WE WILL ACT!**

CALL BILL SMITH COLLECT AT 202+466-8111

**THANK YOU!
JIM Y. DAVIDSON, CHAIRMAN
SMALL SYSTEMS BOARD OF NCTA**



MEADVILLE MASTER ANTENNA, INC.

870 MARKET STREET

MEADVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA 16335

TELEPHONE 335-6288

From the desk of George Barco

March 22, 1974

NCTA Awards Committee
Att: John Gwin
Cox Cable Communications
53 Perimeter Circle
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear John:

For Chairman of the Year, please consider making the award to two men, together: Jim Y. Davidson and Mac Clark of the Independent Operators Board.

Hopefully, this will be a productive group in many situations for many years, but these men deserve special consideration this year.

Jim Davidson literally rescued NCTA at a time of dire and immediate need -- when no one else would do it, or for that matter, could do it. Who else in the industry has the combination of long-time operation, the prestige, the undeniable independent thinking, the enthusiastic leadership for small operators that Jim brought to the organization of this Board. Jim's health is not the best, but he poured strength and leadership into this effort. The organization completed, he relinquished the chairmanship to Mac Clark, but still works as a member of the IOB executive committee.

Arkansas recently recognized Jim by creating the Jim Davidson award. He was an original member of NCTA, was the moving force in creating the Arkansas and South Central Associations, with the designated purpose of giving NCTA support in the field. His company DAVCO was and still is more than an "Equipment Supermarket." Small systems in that entire region look to DAVCO for information, interpretation of national policies and regulations, etc. Jim has been a force in building our industry and came out of retirement to help in its time of need. He deserves to be recognized.

Recollections by Jim Y. Davidson after 25 years in cable television

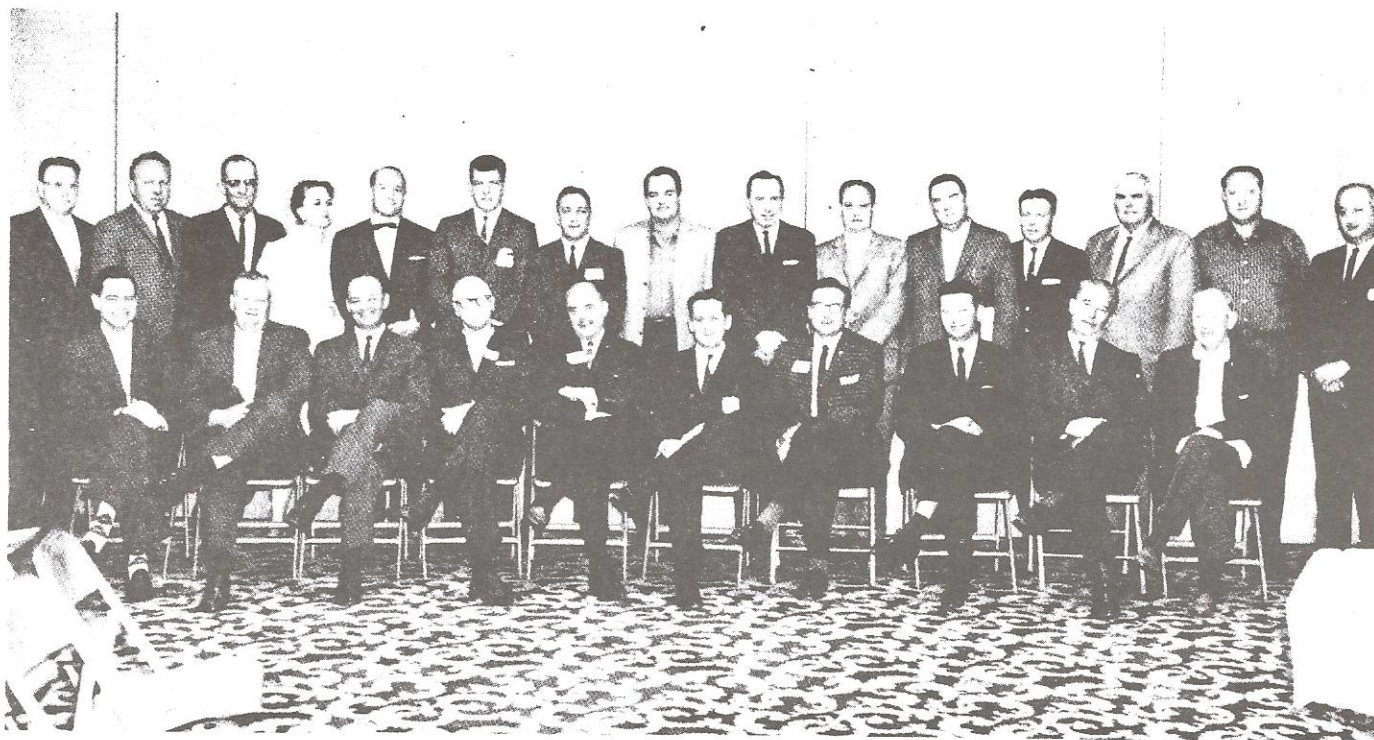
For me, it all started back in 1948. I recall traveling from Tuckerman, Arkansas, where I operated a radio shop and appliance store, over to Memphis, Tennessee on many occasions . . . just to watch the construction of the tower, transmitter and studios of WMCT. Then allocated channel 4, the station later changed to channel 5 and KARK in Little Rock took channel 4, WMCT came on the air in the fall of 1948, the only channel in the mid-south for several years. I was waiting with a 100' tower atop the two-story building in which my shop was located. A single amplifier and some RG-59 cable fed several home-made splitters and matching transformers, primarily to 16 outlets for demonstrating television receivers. I recall some of the popular brands of that era; the RCA 630 chassis, Hallicrafters, Philco and a 7" Motorola were all in stock. We watched the sometimes snowy, sometimes fair pictures with awe. A TV set in the store window attracted crowds at night that blocked traffic. Among the comments I recall persons exclaiming delight when the picture was good enough that they could tell a man from a woman!

The station was about 90 air miles away, operating on low power and a relatively short tower. Subsequent years found WMCT building a taller tower and increasing to maximum power of 100kw.

It was in the late fall of 1948, October I believe, when this all began and I connected my first subscriber to this rather insignificant "system" . . . His name was Carl Toler (now deceased) and he was the local depot agent. I ran the drop with RG-59 from the tower to the corner of the two-story building, then to the traffic light in the intersection of the main street and highway 67. I had no permit to cross



It wasn't all hard work! Bob Jernigan, Gordon Fuqua, Jim Davidson and two unidentified CATV'ers go fishing near Cape Hatteras after an aerial signal survey on the East Coast.



YOU'LL RECOGNIZE MANY CATV OLDTIMERS IN THIS PHOTO . . . ATTENDING THE SOUTH CENTRAL CATV ASSOCIATION MEETING IN HOT SPRINGS, ARKANSAS, APRIL 27-29, 1962. Top row, from left: Ed Dart, Bob Barni, Ira Crosby, Polly Dunn, Fred Rutledge, Vern Coolidge and Bob Jernigan, J. E. Wolf, Travis Arnold, Dave Callahan, Bob Wheeler, Paul Thompson, H. E. Jackson, Sam Phillips and Steve Swarney. Bottom row, from left: Ben Conroy, Fred Stevenson, Frank Haley, Virgil Evans, Bill Dalton, Bob L'Heureux, Doug Gardner, Jim Davidson, Bill Pollard and Bob Neathery . . .

the U. S. highway or to attach to the traffic light. From the light, the drop attached to the corner of a theatre building, then to a large tree trunk and finally to Mr. Toler's home. He paid me \$3.00 per month for this single unreliable channel.

During 1949 I heard of others contemplating or getting into the community antenna business, particularly in the Panther Valley region of Pennsylvania. I heard of Astoria, Oregon and the closest other starting system to me was in Ft. Payne, Alabama.

I was enthused about the need and possibilities of community antenna. Went to Batesville, Arkansas, 114 air-miles from this one available channel, obtained a franchise with the city and started testing on surrounding hilltops for WMCT's signal. I tested over a period of several months, using yagi antennae, barrage balloons, and finally designed and erected a rhombic antenna. A very large one. This produced the best results and I then was anxious to get started. Money was non-existent for this new and highly speculative business. I started with guts and a small co-signed bank loan which soon ran out. I applied to both utilities for pole contracts . . . Both Southwestern Bell Telephone Company and Arkansas Power & Light Company thought I was crazy . . . they had never heard of community antenna systems. I got permission to attach to the power poles and proceeded down the hill toward town . . . to a point where it was necessary to attach to the telephone poles. Soon this contract came through . . . I had applied for it eleven months earlier.

All the time I was watching the signals fade in and out, and was placing my faith in the day when the station would increase power and tower height. I might mention here that the experts in business and radio, including newspaper reporters and myself, were predicting that it would be at least 20 years before Little Rock would have a TV station. How wrong we were!



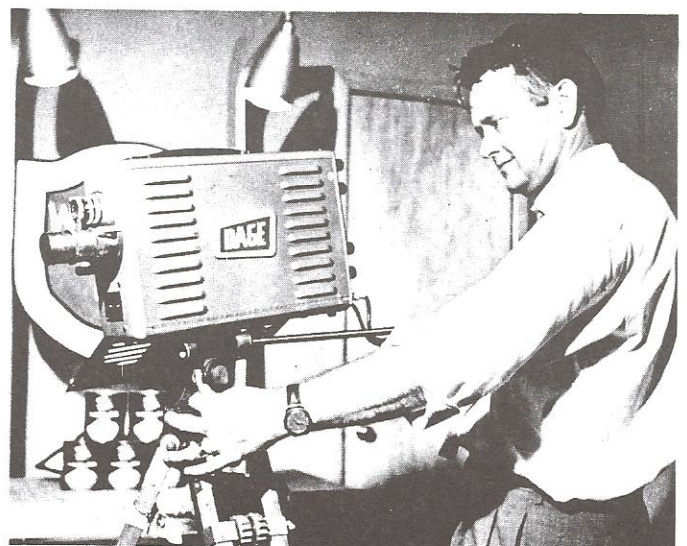
Frank Nowaczek, Fred Stevenson, Jim Davidson and Bob Jernigan at a convention somewhere back in the 50's.

In 1950 I visited Bob Tarlton, Marty Malarkey, George Genslinger and other pioneers up in Pennsylvania, as well as James Killeen at Ft. Payne, Alabama . . . All in about the same stage as I, stringing RG-11 cable and trying to make one-channel systems work . . . I landed in Ft. Payne in a rented Stinson Voyager airplane in a small cow-pasture . . . they had no airport at that time.

I recall many, many visitors to Batesville, Arkansas to see what was going on there. Some way news had traveled far and wide that a community antenna system was being built and men came from all over the country. Most names I do not recall, however many became pioneers of this industry



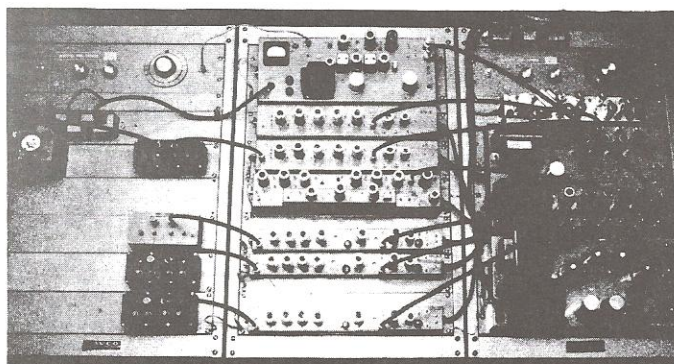
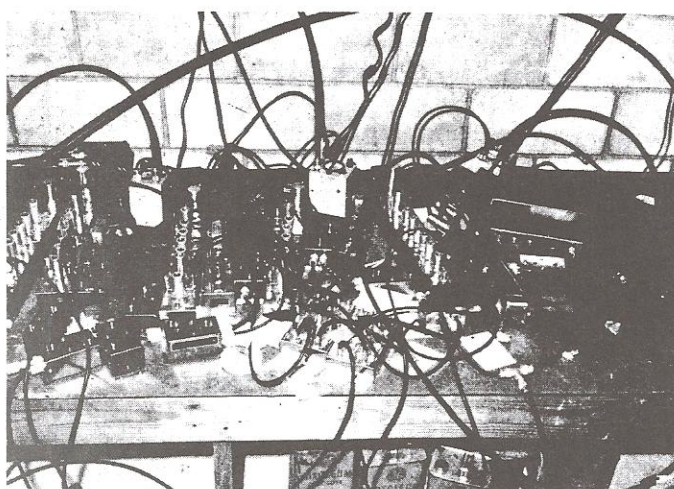
Wally Briscoe and Warren Fribley with Jim Davidson at an early convention in the 50's.



Jim Davidson operating camera for closed-circuit cable TV telecast over the Rogers, Arkansas system back in the 50's.



George Milner, left, of Vumore, Oklahoma City, visited the Davco suite with some of his key personnel. Kim Sanford of Davco is shown as he describes the new Entron High Output Series of amplifier to group. Left to right are Milner, Jim Monroe, Don Turley, Sanford, Jack Shrouf, and Willie Wilkins . . .



I am proud of the many clean-up jobs we did for early systems. These are before and after photos showing a typical head-end installed by the system operator and the Davco head-end that replaced it. We will not reveal this particular location.

and among the most notable is Fred Stevenson of Fayetteville, Arkansas who later acquired the Rogers system after selling his interest in the Fayetteville system. We could write a book on Fred and his dedication and service to cable television. Then there was Bob Wheeler from Harrison, Arkansas; Larry Boggs (now deceased) from Ardmore, Oklahoma; T. C. Masters from Mena, Arkansas and Rudy Riley (deceased) from Drew, Mississippi. I recall the day Rudy flew his airplane to Batesville. He was a hell of a good engineer, a crop duster, and operated his own radio & TV shop in Drew. Rudy immediately closed his shop and represented us at DAVCO in both engineering and construction of systems for a number of years.

There are many others, some unrecognized, who were certainly pioneers. These are just a few that come to mind and further on in this recollection I will recall other names.

I recall visiting with Morris Dunn and Polly at Columbus, Mississippi during their early days in cable television. Polly, as everyone knows, has carried on since Morris' untimely death and she has become well known as an outspoken and respected pioneer.

In the manufacturing end of this business during the very early days we must recall Milt Shapp, now Governor of Pennsylvania with whom I competed on many turnkey construction contracts. Jerrold was certainly a pioneer manufacturer and still a leader. However, I must give credit to a smaller company . . . not really the company but its four founders and, at that time, principal stockholders, for lending me help when I needed it most. I refer to Bob McGeehan, George Edlen (deceased), Hank Diambra and Henry Kane. They appeared in my cable television career at a point in time when I needed them most . . . Little Rock and Memphis both were coming on the air with additional channels and there was absolutely no way to place more than three channels on a system then. Jerrold had the old WMC equipment and they were playing around with their "K" equipment which used the theory of converting down to sub-channels for trunk lines and up to hi-band VHF at the feeder distribution amplifiers.



Kim Sanford, J. D. Pierce and Jamie Davidson at an early convention . . .

This system was short lived.

I have to give credit to Entron for being the first with a five-adjacent-channel system when all others said it was impossible. They did it with the RA-1 chain type low-band, broad-band amplifier. It had 12 6AH6 tubes, and the input voltage was critical, but it worked, when used with their APL and CHL strip head-end amplifiers and their HOT and HOF hi-0 filters.

The first five-channel systems I put together were at Batesville and one for Tom Garrett at Siloam Springs, Arkansas. I had a hell of a time convincing anyone away from there that it was working . . . damn well. I could not get anyone to go look at my five channel systems. They simply did not believe me and thought I was some kind of crackpot.

Then came in rapid succession many other five-channel low-band systems. West Plains, Missouri; Rogers, Arkansas; Drew, Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Mississippi; Amory, Mississippi, and a host of others in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma and other areas too numerous to mention. We were fabricating what we called the "Functional Design" head-end, completely aligned and ready to go. Originally it was five channels, later twelve channels. I delivered hundreds of them in my airplane, as far away as Florida, and completed delivery and installation in one day on most all of them.

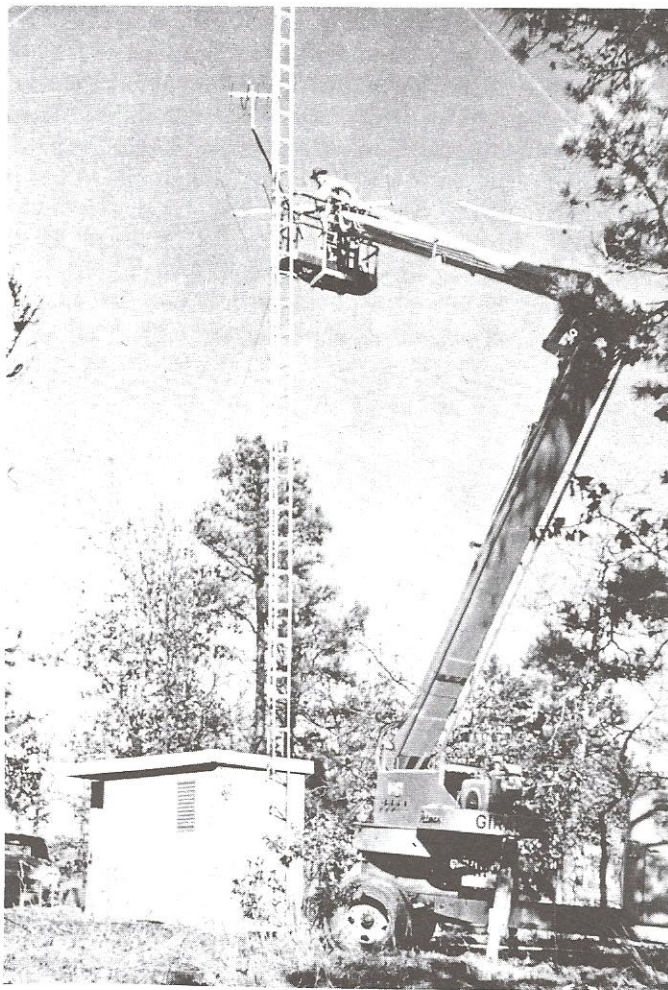
Everything was not rosy during the early fifties . . . I lived on the brink of bankruptcy for several years, not drawing one penny out of the system, doing odd jobs at night like repairing TV sets, playing in a dance band, photography and art work in order to keep food on the table for my family. I can recall hanging on a pole at night during a snowstorm trying to keep home-made single-channel amplifiers working for my 300 or so subscribers. In the very beginning, I had one employee who was paid \$25.00 per week. He and I climbed the poles, strung the cable and installed my single channel amplifiers. We ran the drops, adjusted the TV sets and made excuses for the poor picture.



George Milner, Bob Story and Dick Obarski at the Oklahoma-Kansas meet, May 8, 1964 in Wichita, Kansas . . .



At the Texas CATV Association meeting, April 22-23 in Laredo . . . Kim Sanford of Davco, Wayne McKinney and Bob Rogers of Texas Community Antennas along with Ed Shafer of Entron, in the Davco suite . . .



Davco crew at work adjusting antenna arrays at Winthrop Rockefeller home, Winrock Farms, Petit Jean Mountain in Arkansas, March 1955.

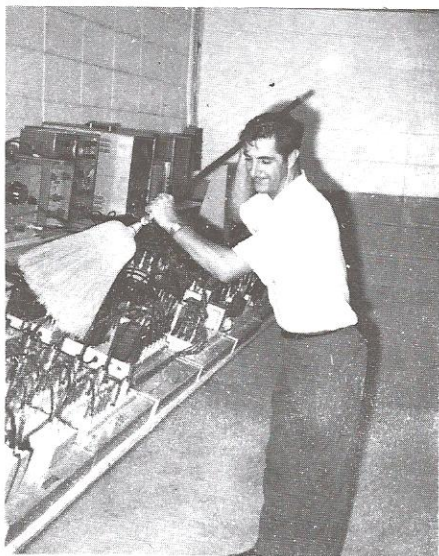
Of course history tells the rest . . . the mid-fifties brought better equipment and finally better cable. We rapidly gained subscribers and built a bunch of systems for ourselves. We engineered and constructed many, many systems for others under turnkey contract. I couldn't count the city councils that I met with and the franchises I helped others obtain. I recall flying to system operators in four or five states in one single day, taking orders and helping with their technical and other problems. There are still many thousands of subscribers watching TV out of our old "Functional Design" head-ends.

As I sit here at the typewriter, though I've been inactive in our business to a great extent for about nine years, other names from the past come to mind. There is Frank Haley of Tupelo, Mississippi; San. & Joe Phillips, Starkville, Mississippi; Ed Baldridge, Many, Louisiana; Joe & Charles Fail of Bay Springs, Mississippi; David Mooney, Camden, Arkansas; Harry Pendergrast of Collinsville, Alabama; Charles Reynolds, Commerce, Texas; Dr. Eustice Winn and Bob Campbell, Corinth, Mississippi; Fred Rutledge, Florence, Alabama; Travis Arnold, Ft. Smith, Arkansas; Bob Platt, Greenwood, Arkansas; H. H. Harris of Ft. Walton Beach, Florida; Chet Borg & Jim McKinney at Ft. Scott, Kansas; W. L. White of Emporia, Kansas; Gene Stuart, Iuka, Mississippi; Joe Davis of Poteau, Oklahoma; Phillip Farr, Jr. of McGehee, Arkansas; (Phillip Farr sold his three systems to me and moved to Guatemala where he is farming about 8,000 acres of cotton!) Dan Boyd and Harold Tisdale of Hattiesburg, Mississippi; George Davis of Huntingdon, Tennessee & Drew, Mississippi; Ken Gunter of San Angelo, Texas; Bill O'Neal, Huntsville, Alabama; Luther Holt, Mahoney City, Pennsylvania; Grady Perkins of Greenwood, Mississippi; N.O. Nusch, T.J. McCable and Claude Lemon of Mountain Home, Arkansas; Hillman Bailey of Natchitoches, Louisiana; Clark Kandell, Monroe, Louisiana; Bob Huston, Phoenix, Arizona; Bill Hall, Salem, Arkansas;

Stan Searle now in Denver; Lane Davis and T. E. Presley (deceased) of Missouri; Allen Price, Morgan City, Louisiana; Bob Clark, Oklahoma; Don Thompson & Leon McAuliff, Rogers, Arkansas; Asa Goldman, Meridian, Mississippi and Asa Jr., now in Demopolis, Alabama; Steve Vaughn of Fayette, Alabama; Tom Cole and Paul Moore of Amory, Mississippi; John Lewis of McComb, Mississippi; Paul Thompson and Bob Neathery of West Plains, Missouri; Bob Jernigan and Vern Collidge of Hattiesburg, Mississippi now moved to other systems . . . Frank Evans of Grenada, Mississippi; Tom Todd of Tuscaloosa, Alabama; Jewell Calaham and Ed LeForce of Broken Bow, Oklahoma; Ira Crosby of Indianola, Mississippi; Jack Treece of Marshall and Heber Springs, Arkansas; T. C. Masters of Mena, Arkansas; Ed Baldridge, Many, Louisiana; Charles Reynolds, Commerce, Texas; Laural Thompson of West Plains, Missouri; Doug Gardner, Greenville, Mississippi; Bob Rogers and Wayne McKinney of Tyler, Texas and many other places; Tom Todd and Otto Miller of Tuscaloosa, Alabama; J. E. Wolf of Cleveland, Mississippi. Then there's Kim Sanford, Bob Harmon, Frank Nowaczek, Jim Monroe, Dick O'Barski, Carl Williams, Ed Dart, Bob Barni, Bill Pollard and goodness knows how many more. If I don't stop now, Bob Huston will not have room for this story.

I have to recall many pleasant experiences with Larry Boggs (deceased) who started in Ardmore, Oklahoma and later was affiliated with one of the first large MSO's primarily operating in the Oklahoma-Texas-Mississippi areas.

Then there are Bill Daniels, Marty Malarkey, George Barco, John Campbell, Wally Briscoe, Jack Crosby, Ben Conroy, George Spelvin, Glenn Flinn, Gordon Fuqua, Bob Regan, Al Ricci, Holland Rannells (deceased), Irv Kahn, Al Kozminski, Bob Magness, Johnny Mankin, Bruce Merrill, Ed Parsons, Jim Palmer, Sam Haddock, John Walson, Ray Schneider, Clive Runnells, Strat Smith, Fred Ford, Bob L'Heureux (deceased),



J. D. Pierce of Davco "sweeping" a head-end!



Jim Davidson at left in helicopter doing a signal survey at Paducah, Kentucky in the early 50's. Notice antenna attached to helicopter at right.



Paul Thompson, Robert Neathery, Jim Davidson, Robert Harmon, Joe Bean and J. E. Wolf, posing with one of their fine riding horses during installation of towers for the West Plains system, 1956.



Delivery of Davco head-end for Biloxi TV Cable. Bob Jernigan and Vern Coolidge receiving their Davco head-end from Jim Davidson at the Gulfport, Ms., airport. The system offered eight TV channels, one time & weather, and four FM stations.

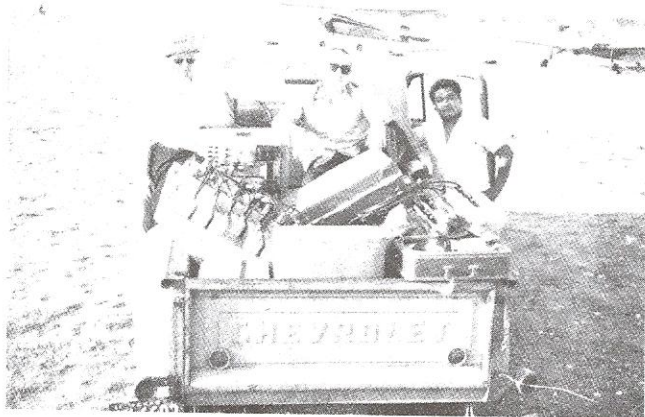
Archer Taylor, Randy Tucker, Ralph Weir, Bill Dimmerling, Ed Whitney, Fred Goddard, Carl Williams, Bill Adler, Beverly Murphy, Frank Thompson, Charley Clements, Warren Fribley, Bill Karnes and many more that just don't pop in mind at this moment.

Many of the above are members of the exclusive Pioneers Club, but I cannot list them all from memory. By the same token, there are many more with whom I had contact in the early days that I don't recall at the moment . . . hope I have not offended anyone. Believe me, there are many cable TV operators that date back to the era prior to 1960 that deserve to be recognized but for all these years they have quietly gone about the business of running their systems with

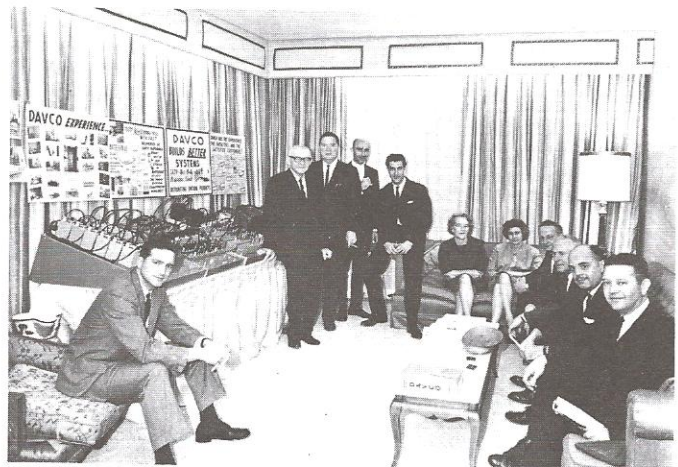
little or no fanfare.

Many systems are now operated by second generation . . . There's my son, Jamie, now 30, who grew up in this crazy business. He started back in high school days as a "grunt" on construction jobs, working in the field in summer and spare time during school terms. Jamie is now one of the busiest men in cable television and I give him credit, along with our other loyal employees for my being able to retire some nine years ago.

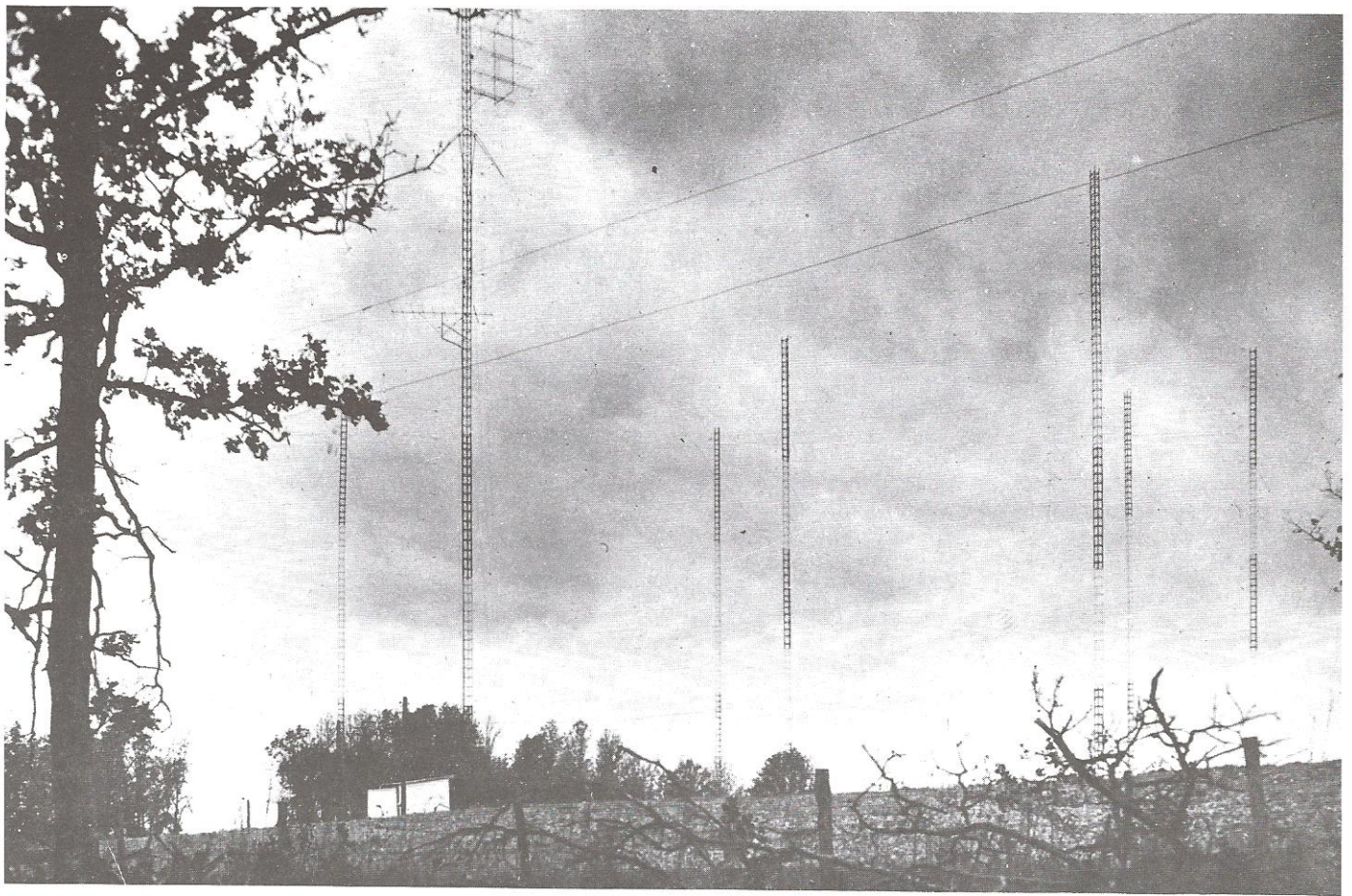
Another second generation operation is Bobby and W. J. Wheeler of Harrison, Arkansas. They are operating several systems out of their Harrison, Arkansas offices which were started by their father . . .



Left to right: Sanford, Shafer and the Mexican truck owner with a load of the equipment from the Davco-Entron display, at the Laredo Airport just before loading up the Davco Aztec for the long return trip. (Two rattlesnakes were found under the wheels of the airplane parked next to Davco's!)



Left to right at a South Central meeting in New Orleans, La., in February, 1963, Carl Williams, Tom Garrett, Bob Wheeler, Roy Holloway, J. D. Pierce, Mrs. Tom Garrett, Mr. & Mrs. Sid Young, Joe Davis, Bill Dalton and Jim Davidson in the Davco suite.



This is the rhombic farm at West Plains, Missouri designed and built by Davidson in the mid 50's and still in use today. He designed and constructed the first known rhombic strictly for cable TV use in 1949 and 1950 and it is still in use at their Batesville, Arkansas system. They have found no commercial antenna that will perform better for this particular signal requirement.

Then there's Bob Neathery, Jr., now operating a number of systems in Missouri that were started by he, his father and Paul Thompson.

As I ramble on with this story, names keep coming to mind. Two of the early pioneers of cable television are Virgil and H. E. Jackson. They built and operated the system at Vidalia, Louisiana. After selling this system they moved on to Buras and Venice, Louisiana, about 100 miles below New Orleans. They have to receive the award for "not giving up" . . . Soon after we built this system for them it was totally destroyed by hurricane Betsy. They rebuilt . . . Then along came hurricane Camille. Total destruction again. Now they have completely rebuilt the third time and we wish them no more disasters and much success.

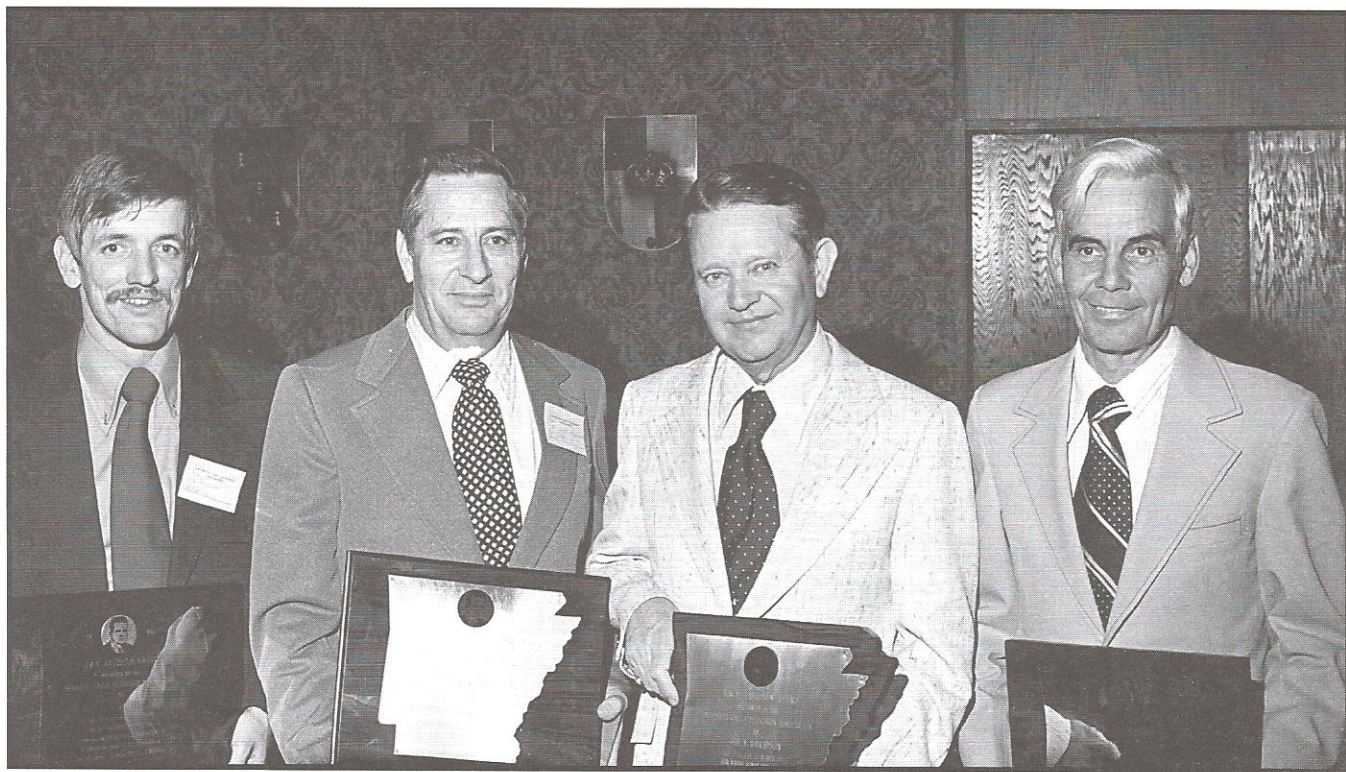
Many pioneers are not system owners but work for others . . . I refer to men like Hank Weletok who has been with the Wheelers operating several systems in northwest Arkansas. In our companies we have several in their sixteenth year in cable television. Some oldtimers in our companies are Delores Wallace who came with me so long ago that she was the second employee. Then followed J. D. Pierce, Philly's Barber, Harold Wilson, Gene Barnett, Dwayne Millikin, Major

Blissitt, Deb Platt, Tommy Kinion, Junior Milligan and many others, are still with DAVCO.

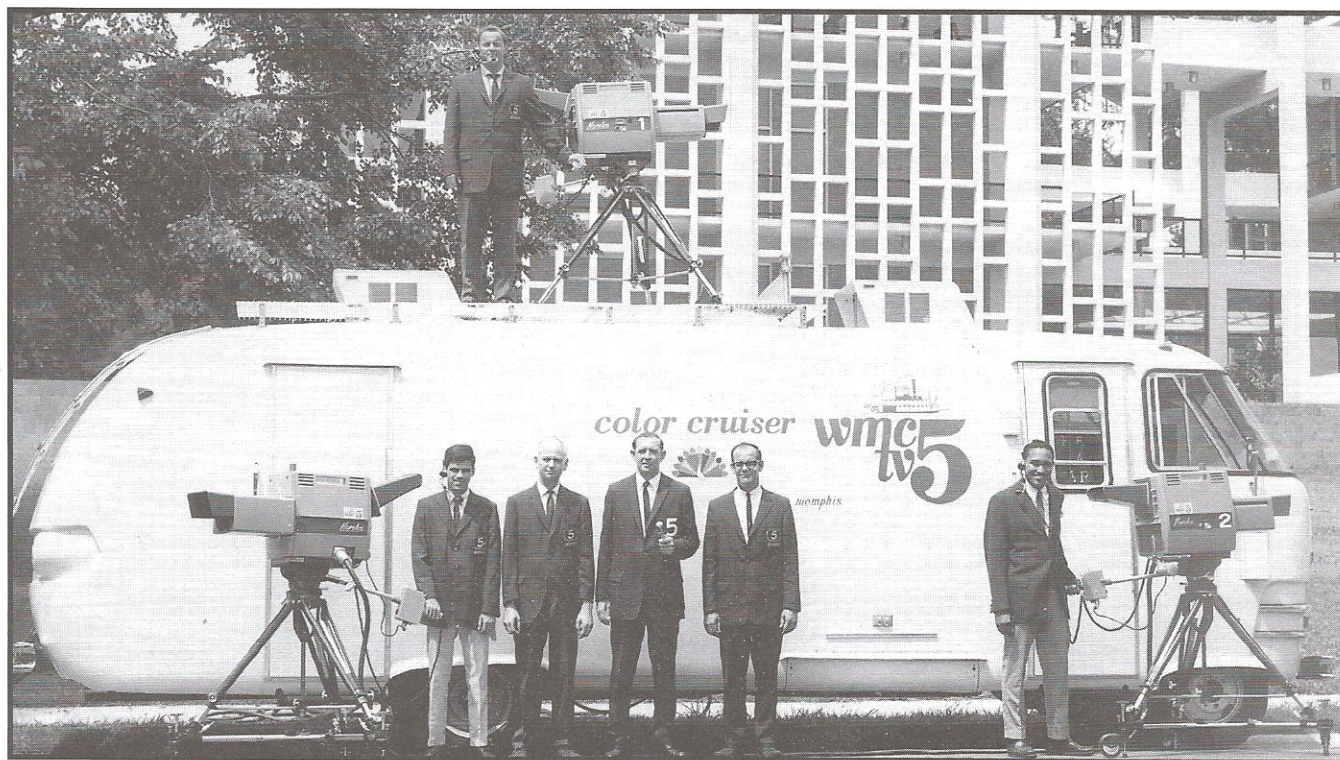
Then there's Rip Lindsay at Fayetteville, Arkansas. Rip was the engineer at the local radio station there with Fred Stevenson when they started the cable system at Fayetteville. Rip is truly a pioneer in cable TV and still active.

So far I have primarily dwelled on the fifties . . . and it looks like I have already used up too much space. When I sat down at the typewriter I had no format, but somehow just started recalling pleasant associations with many early cable TV pioneers . . . I am amazed at how many, many there are and know there are many more from all over the country who started in the "Good Old Days" . . . Dean Burch recently told me that he doubted if the "Good Old Days" ever existed. I challenge him to ask any of the ones I have mentioned in this story . . .

As to the future of cable television . . . We all know what we have been living with and what the possibilities are in the area of FCC regulation, copyright, state regulation and other problems facing our industry. I would like to be optimistic about the future, but in this sea of bureaucracy it looks dismal.

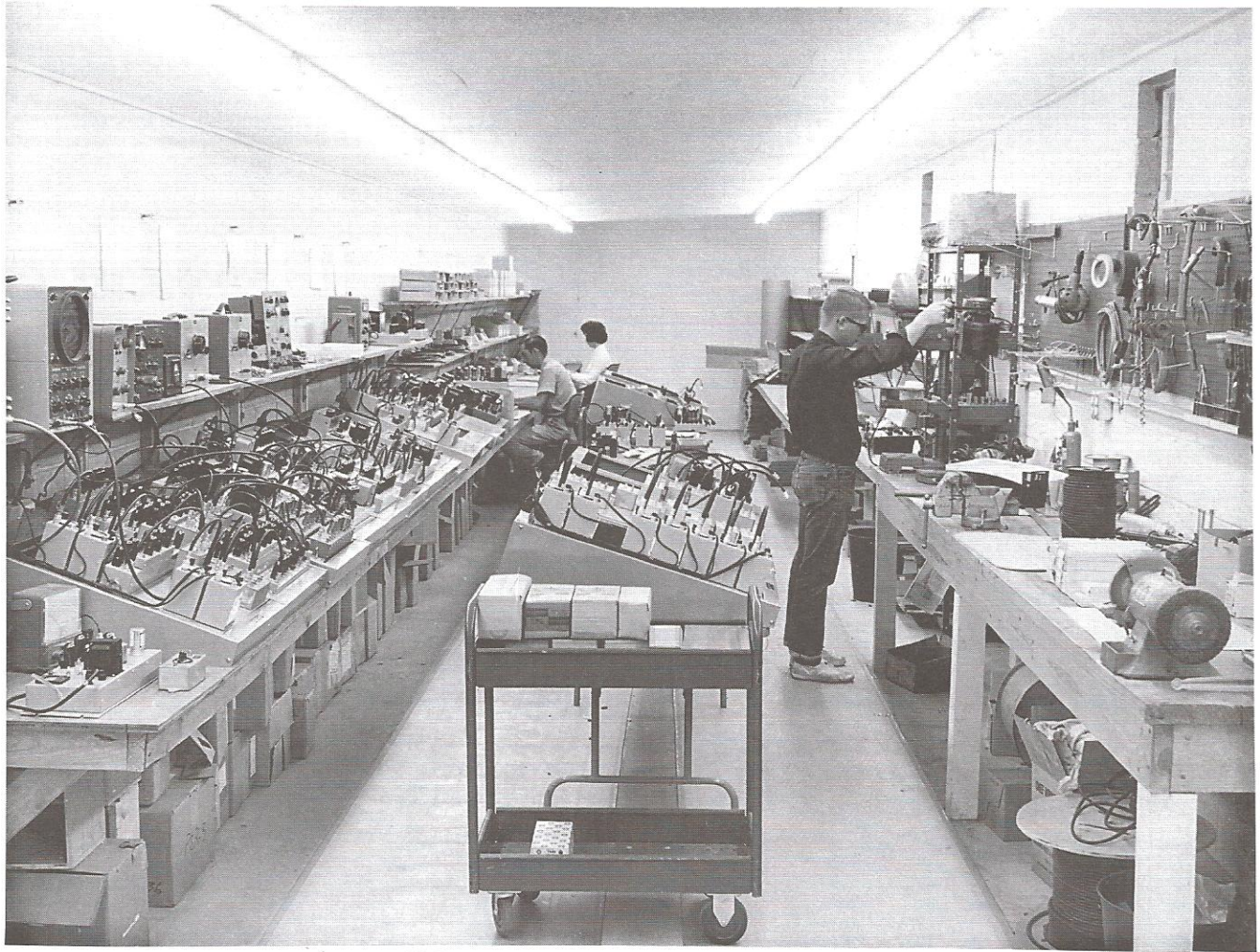


At the March, 1974 Arkansas Cable TV Association meeting four recipients of the J. Y. Davidson annual award. They are, from left to right, Bobby Wheeler of Harrison, Bud Williams of Rogers, J. Y. Davidson of Batesville and T. C. Masters of Mena.

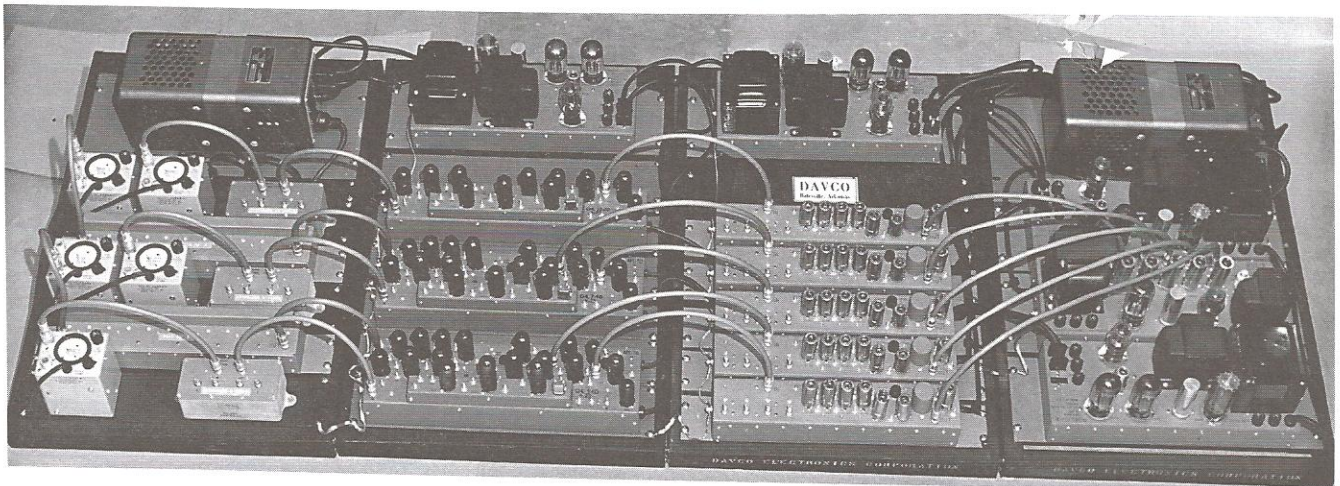


WMCT's FIRST MOBILE TELEVISION UNIT.
Picture probably made in early fifties.

The DAVCO Electronics lab in Batesville, Arkansas



J. E. "Jamie" Davidson and others working in the DAVCO lab



**ONLY DAVCO OFFERS YOU
"Functional Design Head-end"**

**At the DAVCO Electronics lab in Batesville, Arkansas
which was very active in the 50's, 60's and 70's.**



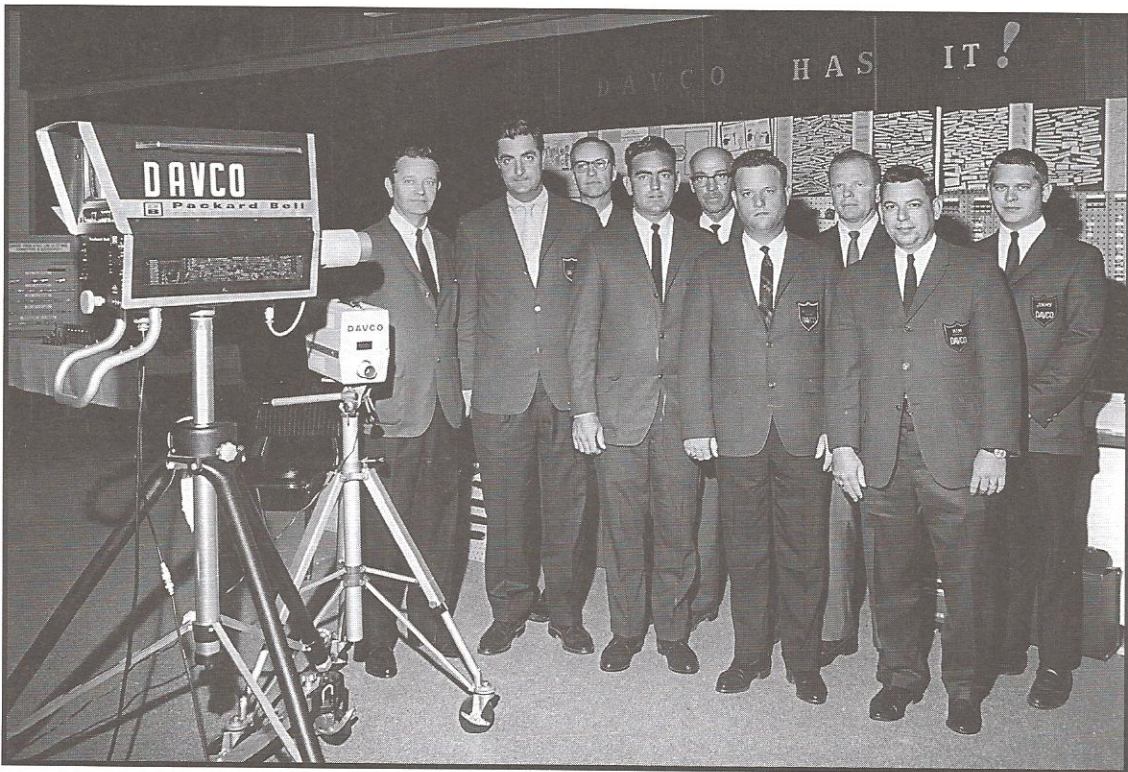
DAVCO Electronics built hundreds of racks of custom "Functional Design" head ends for cable systems over a wide area of the country. We also built and assembled a variety of other cable items. At the time, we had the best in the industry.

We would often load completed head ends in my airplane and I would deliver and install them in one day.

Left front is Calvin Everett and right front is J. Y. "Jimmy" Davidson. In the far rear is J. D. Pierce and Martha Crosser.



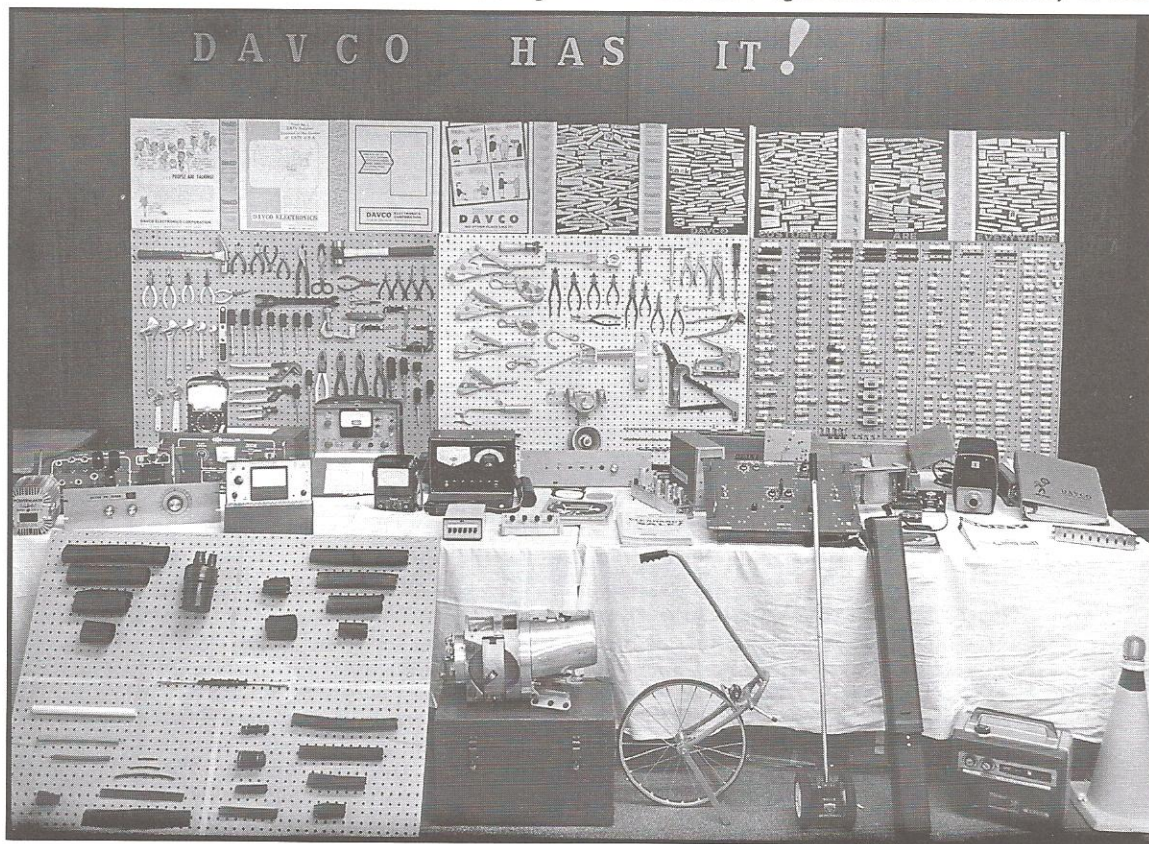
Jimmy Davidson, President of DAVCO Electronics, showing his "Functional Design" 12-channel head end at a cable convention in New Orleans in 1963



DAVCO exhibited at many cable conventions. This one was at Jackson, Mississippi. All DAVCO personnel were easy to find in their bright Razorback red jackets bearing the DAVCO logo. Left to right: Jimmy Davidson, J. D. Pierce, Gene Barnett, Harold Wilson, Howard Hutches, Kim Sanford and J. E. 'Jamie' Davidson. Two in background are unidentified.

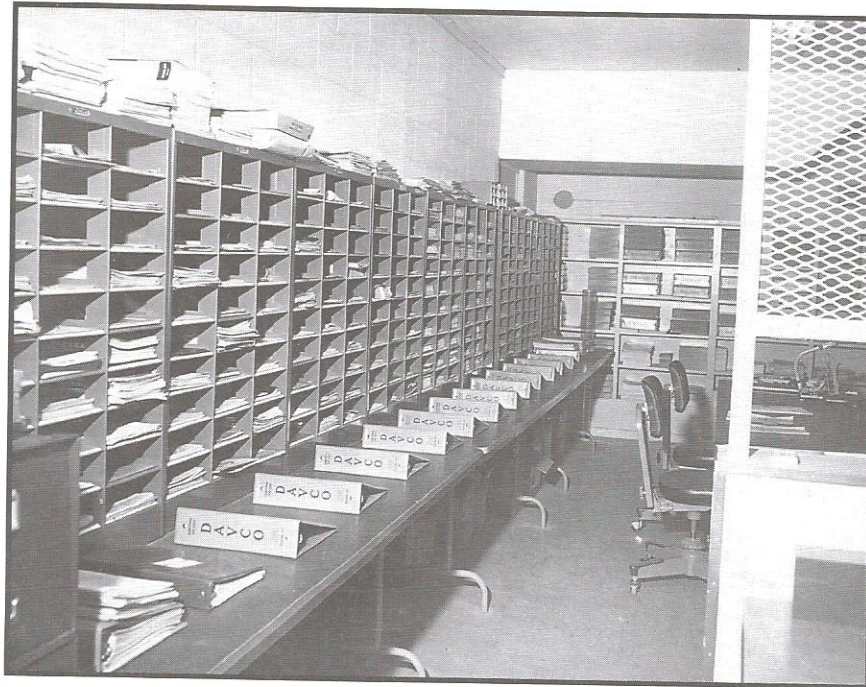


Jimmy Davidson stands at the base of his 500 foot tower on top of Crowley's Ridge between Helena and West Helena. System went into operation in October, 1968.

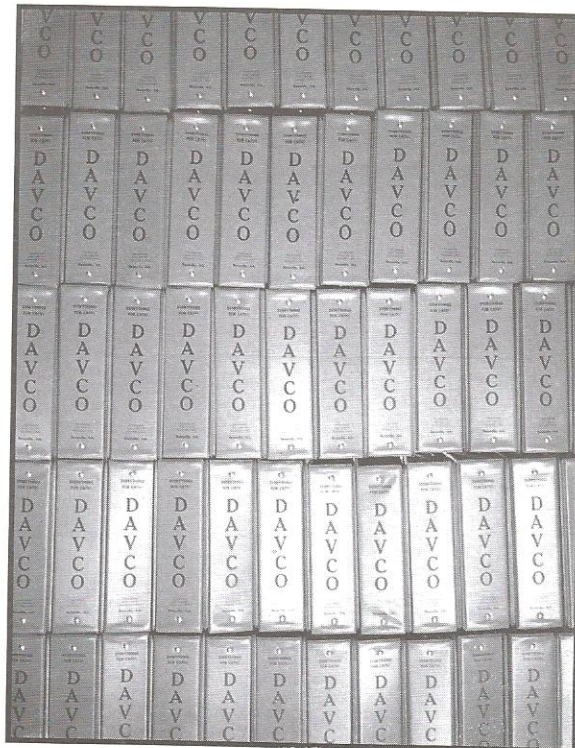


**Part of a typical DAVCO exhibit at cable conventions.
We stocked a wide variety of cable products.**

DAVCO ELECTRONICS HAD AN IMPRESSIVE CATALOG DEPARTMENT

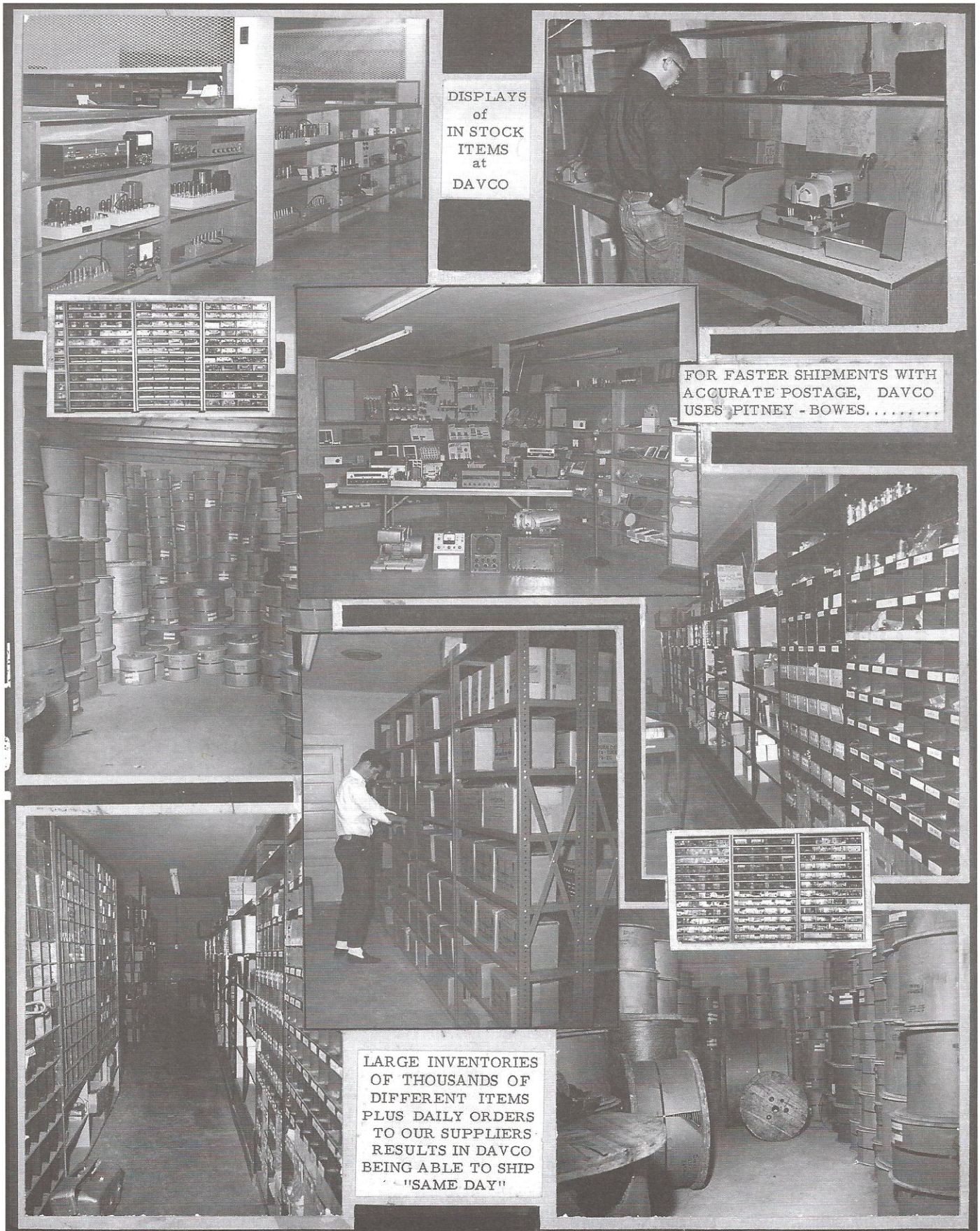


DAVCO CATALOG DEPARTMENT

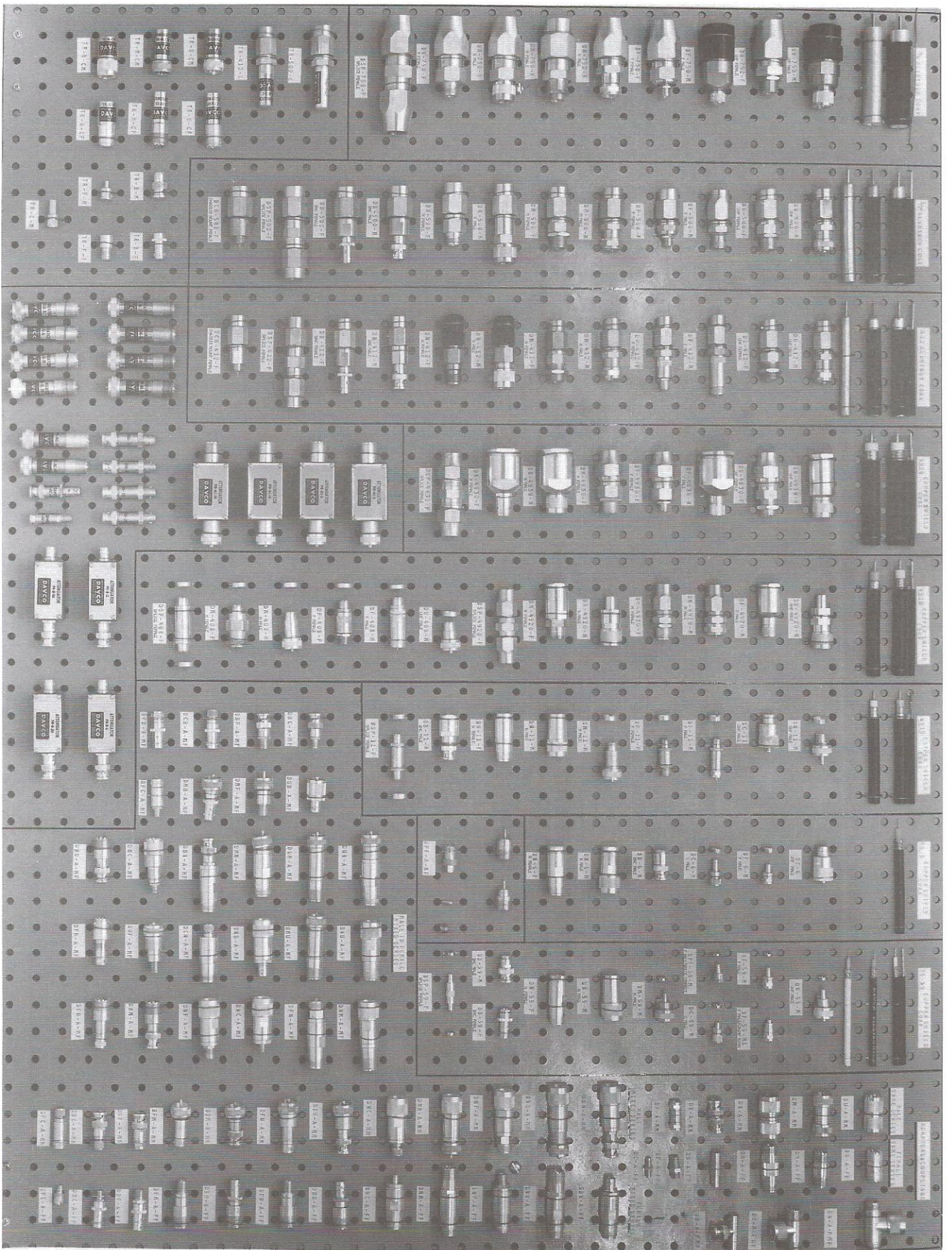


DAVCO Electronics really put Batesville, Arkansas on the map! Many people in other states had never heard of Batesville until Jim Davidson started DAVCO Electronics Corporation, the "CATV SUPERMARKET." These bright orange 3" thick loose-leaf catalogs were mailed to thousands of DAVCO customers in all 48 contiguous states. Frequent update and new listing mailings went out to everyone who had a DAVCO catalog. The DAVCO inventory grew to so many items that it eventually took three of these binders to hold catalog sheets on all the items carried in stock.

We used an "addressograph machine" (which was state-of-the-art at that time) to speed up mailings



At DAVCO Electronics we carried thousands of items in stock – even unusual and hard-to-get items, making shipments to customers in every state. Dozens of shipments went out every day to satisfied cable customers.



These are just a few of the connectors and passive devices stocked by DAVCO Electronics.

J. E. "JAMIE" DAVIDSON
By his father, J. Y. "Jimmy" Davidson

Jamie was only 6 weeks old when I joined the U. S. Navy on February 4, 1944. He was just 4 years old when I connected my first cable subscriber in October, 1948 and he literally grew up with me in the cable business, ultimately building systems of his own.

Young Davidson has experienced all facets of CATV. He worked on construction crews in several states, during summer vacations while attending high school and college. He is very active at the present in Junior Chamber of Commerce work.



1964



1950

ONE AND THE SAME.....

This should indicate the age of the Batesville system, since the youngster standing beside the cable truck is the same one shown in the picture above. His name:

Jim E. Davidson, now Vice President of Davco and very active in the affairs of the company.

It can truly be stated that young Jimmy has grown up simultaneous with-and very much a part of CATV...

South-Central CATV ASSOCIATION



ALABAMA ARKANSAS LOUISIANA MISSISSIPPI MISSOURI

JAN 1960 LITTLE ROCK

FRED J STEVENSON
President
JIM DAVIDSON
Sec'y-Treas

STATE CO-ORDINATORS

TOM TODD
Alabama
BOB WHEELER
Arkansas
H E JACKSON
Louisiana
W D GARDNER
Mississippi
PAUL THOMPSON
Missouri
FRED J STEVENSON
NCTA Director

FALL 1960 MEMPHIS

VIRGIL EVANS
President
JIM DAVIDSON
Sec'y-Treas

DIRECTORS

W H POLLARD
Alabama
DON THOMPSON
Arkansas
JIM HALL
Louisiana
DOUG GARDNER
Mississippi
PAUL THOMPSON
Missouri
FRED STEVENSON
Retiring President
NCTA Director

SEPT 1961 JACKSON

W D GARDNER
President
JIM DAVIDSON
Sec'y-Treas

DIRECTORS

W H POLLARD
Alabama
FRED STEVENSON
Arkansas
VIRGIL JACKSON
Louisiana
FRANK HALEY
Mississippi
ROBERT F NEATHERY
Missouri
VIRGIL EVANS
Retiring President
NCTA Director

APRIL 1962 HOT SPRINGS

OCT 1962 HOT SPRINGS

JIM DAVIDSON
President
ROBERT JERNIGAN
Sec'y Treas

DIRECTORS

W H POLLARD
Alabama
WAYNE MC KINNEY
Arkansas
VIRGIL EVANS
Louisiana
J E WOLFE
Mississippi
BOB NEATHERY
Missouri
W D GARDNER
Retiring President
VIRGIL EVANS
FRED STEVENSON
NCTA Directors

APRIL 1961 MEMPHIS

FEB 1963 NEW ORLEANS

JIM DAVIDSON
President
ROBERT JERNIGAN
Sec'y Treas

DIRECTORS

FRED RUTLEDGE
Alabama
WAYNE McKINNEY
Arkansas
VIRGIL EVANS
Louisiana
ROBERT NEATHERY
Missouri
J E WOLFE
Mississippi
VIRGIL EVANS
NCTA Director
FRED STEVENSON
NCTA Chairman

MAY 1964 JACKSON

ROBERT F JERNIGAN
President
POLLY DUNN (MRS M M)
Sec'y-Treas

DIRECTORS

ALLEN WILLIAMS
Alabama
FRED STEVENSON
Arkansas
JOHN CAMPBELL
Georgia
VIRGIL EVANS
Louisiana
IRA CROSBY
Mississippi
ROBERT NEATHERY
Missouri
JIM DAVIDSON
Retiring President
NCTA Director
FRED STEVENSON
NCTA Chairman
LEONARD REINSCH
NCTA Director

MARCH 1965 BILOXI

ROBERT F JERNIGAN
President
POLLY DUNN '65
Sec'y-Treas
FRED STEVENSON '66
Sec'y-Treas

DIRECTORS

ALLEN WILLIAMS
Alabama
JIM DAVIDSON
Arkansas
H H HARRIS
Florida
JOHN CAMPBELL
Georgia
VIRGIL JACKSON
Louisiana
GRADY PERKINS
Mississippi
ROBERT NEATHERY
Missouri
DON CURTIS
North Carolina
PAT RUTHERFORD
Tennessee
ROBERT JERNIGAN
Retiring President
NCTA Director
DOUG DANSER
LEONARD REINSCH
NCTA Directors

MARCH 1966 BILOXI

FRED J. STEVENSON
President
ORLANDO E BRILLANTE
Vice President
BYRON D JARVIS
Sec'y-Treas

DIRECTORS

MILTON UNDERWOOD
Alabama
TOM GARRETT
Arkansas
HARRY HARKINS
Florida
HILLMAN BAILEY
Louisiana
IRA CROSBY
Mississippi
L H TAYLOR
North Carolina
DONALD W. CURTIS
South Carolina
PAT RUTHERFORD
Tennessee
ROBERT JERNIGAN
Retiring President
NCTA Director
BYRON D. JARVIS
MARCUS BARTLETT
NCTA Directors

APRIL 1967 ASHEVILLE

WILLIAM F HEMMINGER
President
ORLANDO E BRILLANTE
Vice President
DOUGLAS C TALBOTT
Sec'y-Treas

DIRECTORS

MILTON UNDERWOOD
Alabama
DAVID MOONEY
Arkansas
HARRY BENNETT
Florida
DOUG TALBOTT
Georgia
CHICK WILLIAMS
Louisiana
DOUG GARDNER
Mississippi
BOB NEATHERY
Missouri
DON CURTIS
South Carolina
L H TAYLOR
North Carolina
DOUG COOPER
Tennessee
FRED STEVENSON
Retiring President
BYRON D JARVIS
MARCUS BARTLETT
W H HEMMINGER
NCTA Directors



SOUTHERN CATV ASSOCIATION

South-Central CATV ASSOCIATION

ALABAMA

ARKANSAS

LOUISIANA

MISSISSIPPI

MISSOURI



EARLY HISTORY SOUTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

In an Arkansas lakeside camp, late in 1959, the groundwork for our present association was laid by seven Ozark operators: Fred Stevenson, Jim Davidson, Bob Wheeler, Paul Thompson, Bob Meathery, Tom Garrett, Robert Purdy. Jim Davidson called and hosted the meeting at Bob Wheeler's camp, because he shared the concern of NCTA Director Fred Stevenson over the need of more communication among the states of the region Stevenson represented on the National Board, and the need to strengthen the ties between the operators in this area and the National Association which spoke for them in Washington. The resolution for calling an organizational meeting was presented by Fred Stevenson, moved for adoption by Jim Davidson, seconded by Paul Thompson, and unanimously passed.

Twenty-five operators from five states gathered in Little Rock on January 16, 1960 and formed the South Central CATV Association, with Fred Stevenson as first President, Jim Davidson as Secretary-Treasurer. Ed Whitney, NCTA Director, and three NCTA Directors, Larry Boggs, Glenn Flinn and Fred Stevenson led the discussions. During the following months, Jim Davidson designed a letterhead for South Central CATV Association which included five original states and the seal of NCTA. All systems were urged to join.

The entire proceedings of the August 1960 meeting were tape recorded. Thirteen of the thirty-eight systems in the five states were represented at this meeting; eighteen, at the spring meeting in April 1961. Constitution and by-laws were worked on in both meetings.

The Constitution called for a President, Secretary-Treasurer and a Board of Directors made up of a representative from each state, the retiring President, plus as ex-officio member(s) any South Central member(s) currently NCTA Director(s) or NCTA officer(s). Dues were set at \$2.50 per month for Associate members and 1¢ per subscriber per month for systems. However, this 1¢ rate threatened to swamp the newly launched association within a year, so the system dues were reduced to \$1 per month with the agreement that the \$750 allocated toward the travel expense of the regional NCTA Director would be pro-rated among the member states. Fred Stevenson asked that his share of this fund be counted as a contribution to the Association and his successors rarely called for it, either. Later the area doubled in size, and in his second administration, President Stevenson was voted a travel fund to alleviate expenses in going to the many State Association meetings and a NCTA Board meeting. The original stipulation for two meetings a year was changed in 1962 to one spring meeting, at least 60 days prior to the national convention, and (in 1964 revision) if possible, to run concurrently with the host state's own association meeting.

The titles on the program pages of the succeeding years seem much the same: Problems with telephone contracts, translators, broadcasters, FCC, legislation; ways to increase service to subscribers. During these early years, systems were particularly vulnerable because efforts were being made on all sides to negotiate contracts and set up policies on an individual basis. To prevent damaging precedents for the entire industry, as well as economic damage to involved systems, NCTA did a David-and-Goliath job of coordinating and bolstering efforts to present a united front. Our Association meetings have always been attended by cable operators prominent on the national level; the National President or Chairman or both, two or more NCTA Directors, and other visitors deeply involved in working with problems of the cable industry as a whole.

South Central Association immediately proved its worth by inviting broadcasters in the five state area to join cable operators for cocktails and dinner in Memphis April 1961. The cordiality and exchange of ideas at this meeting was a giant step forward in CATV-Broadcaster relations. At the 1961 fall meeting in Jackson, guests from the Telephone Company and television stations of the region were entertained.

In 1962, the National Association was deeply involved in a copyright suit to protect a principle affecting all cable systems. Far too expensive to be undertaken by one operator, this litigation obviously could (and did) absorb years of effort and staggering legal fees. South Central voted a resolution endorsing an increase in NCTA dues.

In February 1963, a meeting was held in New Orleans concurrently with that of the National Board of Directors. By unanimous vote, the members voted an endorsement of Fred Stevenson for NCTA Chairman. His election in June began a highly critical year for our industry and with the President's post vacant, his leadership was doubly tested. The respected competence of Past President Virgil Evans as a Director was also a credit to South Central.

In the fall of 1964, Jim Davidson concluded his second term as President, his fifth of continuous service as an officer of South Central, and was appreciatively endorsed as South Central's candidate for the National Board. During these five years, South Central had grown from the first few who attended, to thirty-seven systems and thirteen manufacturers represented in Jackson. At this 1964 Jackson meeting, the Association added a new service to its members. The technical session, which was a part of the concurrent Mississippi Association meeting, was enhanced by the larger regional attendance. Its success caused South Central to plan a special Seminar for technicians preliminary to its annual meetings... a decision welcomed by the Associate members.

By 1965 more state associations had been formed, and there was increasing need of a larger regional organization. As a direct result of President Robert Jernigan's efforts during the first year of his office, ten states were represented at the Biloxi meeting, with 110 systems and 29 associates registered members. He had traveled into member states to meet and advise with groups faced with PUC hearings, and had helped to form two new state associations. Governor Paul Johnson spoke for Mississippi and as a cable subscriber on the value of CATV. Bob L'Heureux told of a few legal victories won; Duane Crist announced that CATV financing was easier to obtain; Bob Huston said that it was time for everyone to include a Public relations budget allotment; Bill Daniels painted a rosy future; and Wally Briscoe discussed the effective relationship of the regional and national associations. All in all there was a definite feeling of growth and progress in this expanded, newly named SOUTHERN CATV ASSOCIATION.

Respectfully submitted, April 1971

Polly Dunn, Historian

Chronological list of officers and Directors attached.

EARLY RADIO
WITH EXCURSIONS INTO TELEVISION
plus
SCAM ARTISTS ON RADIO AND TV
and
A BIT OF PERSONAL HISTORY
by
James Yates Davidson - 1994
Revised and updated in 1998

- o -

My father, E. Y. Davidson, was instrumental in the early development of radio, and since radio was my primary profession from childhood to the advent of television in my area in 1948, it is fitting that I write a brief history of radio and let it revolve around my personal experiences. My source for this radio history is mostly from my personal memory and experience, plus a bit of research in our home library. I will include brief vignettes that are not directly related to radio but will aid in the continuity of this writing. I make it clear that this writing is condensed and in no way should be taken as a complete history of radio. Writers have already filled volumes with detailed radio history and it is not my intent to rewrite what has already been done. Neither is this a complete and detailed history of my experiences in radio. To tell all of my experiences in radio would probably become boring to the reader. One of the best and most complete books in our library on radio is "Empire of the Air," a 421 page book by Tom Lewis, a professor of English at Skidmore College.

It is appropriate to add here that I lost both my parents at an early age, my mother, Naomi Alice Davidson in 1929 and my father, Ellie Yates Davidson in 1930. It was right after the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929 and I was age eight, had a sister Dorothy Amelia who was five and another sister, Norma Jeanne age two. More about this later on in this writing.

- o -

Dictionaries loosely define radio as "the technology and process of communications by means of radio waves," adding a few specific applications. By examining today's myriad uses of radio (especially since the advent of satellites) this broad definition is correct but space in the dictionary would not allow for the myriad detailed uses of radio communications as it exists today. It is fitting to note here that only commercial AM and FM radio stations (and now commercial television stations) are supported solely by the sale of advertising. All the many other uses of radio are supported by other means. There's the now popular cellular telephone service and thanks to satellites there are tiny beepers and pagers, interconnection of business computers, digital delivery of information, global positioning systems, television network and station remotes, feeds for cable TV and on and on.

Names of early inventors come to mind as I recall and review the history of radio. As a prelude to radio broadcasting, the late 1800's and early 1900's saw invention and development of sending messages by both wire and wireless telegraph. Samuel F. B. Morse who, as early as 1837, had built a 10 mile line on which he sent and

received messages using the Morse code that he had also invented. In 1840 Morse was granted a U. S. patent for his telegraph. Congress granted Morse \$30,000 to build a line between Baltimore and Washington and on May 24, 1844 Morse successfully tapped out his famous message, "What hath God wrought?" Morse died in 1872, just five years before my dad was born. Alexander Graham Bell received his telephone patent in 1876. Bell died in the year of my birth, 1922. Other famous names of early inventors such as Marconi and Edison come to mind. Though the experiments and inventions of these great men may be considered the predecessor to radio, their inventions were crude as compared to broadcasting and receiving equipment as it is today.

Speaking of Thomas Edison, Janet and I have stood in awe many times as we toured his laboratory and museum at his summer home in Ft. Myers, Florida. This tour is highly recommended to anyone with an interest in early radio, motion picture equipment, electrical equipment, electrical generators and Edison phonographs. There is a very large display of these items as well as a fantastic display of electric light bulbs. Visitors are allowed to view the museum displays as well as his laboratory and summer home. It is all located in a beautiful setting of tropical trees and plants where the Gulf of Mexico and Caloosahatchee River merge. Scanning the list of Edison's more than 1,000 patents leaves me in wonderment and respect for this great man of science. I was only nine years old when Edison died in 1931 at age 84. Edison's inventions contributed to the development of radio, the phonograph, motion pictures, light bulbs, electrical generators and many other future developments of the 20th century. One of the nicest (and very undeserved) compliments that I ever received was when Wilson Powell, longtime editor of the Batesville Daily Guard, told me that he always thought of me as "the Thomas Edison of Batesville." Again, a very undeserved but appreciated compliment! I couldn't possibly be compared to Thomas Edison!

Crude as early radio broadcasting was by today's standards, it was still a quantum leap from early telegraph and telephone. Invention of the vacuum tube made radio broadcasting and receiving possible. During the late 1800's and early 1900's experimentation was in progress on simple two-element vacuum tubes. Edison invented a diode vacuum tube and British inventor John Fleming also experimented with these relatively simple vacuum tubes, or "valves" as the British called them, but no significant practical application was derived from their experiments until the introduction of a third element (grid) into the vacuum tube. In 1907 Lee de Forest was granted a U. S. patent for the triode which he called the "audion." These first triode vacuum tubes contributed greatly to wireless radio broadcasting and receiving over longer distances. De Forest became known as the "father of radio," and other names such as Howard Armstrong and David Sarnoff joined de Forest in accomplishing the development of the radio sending and receiving apparatus as well as the practical use of the new medium. Lee de Forest died in 1961 when I was 39 years old.

Perhaps not so well known was a gentleman named Reginald Aubrey Fessenden who made many contributions to the early development of radio and actually got into a lawsuit with Lee de Forest. We have visited the site where, in 1902, Fessenden succeeded in the first wireless transmission of music which he sent from Buxton on the western side of Roanoke Island across Palmico Sound in North Carolina's Outer Banks, a distance of 48 miles. Despite his early 1902 achievement Fessenden failed to gain as much notoriety as other prominent names in the early development of radio. His name is not listed in the index of either of our two sets of encyclopedias. However, he is covered in the encyclopedia's section on radio where it is stated that "There are many claims for the first broadcast of

speech, but most historians give credit to Fessenden."

In early 1997 Janet and I flew to the Outer Banks of North Carolina, primarily to visit the Orville and Wilbur Wright Museum at Kittyhawk. We accidentally stumbled across a roadside marker proclaiming Fessenden's achievement in 1902. We purchased a postcard in a gift shop and are reproducing it in this writing.

In order for radio to be practical for transmitting to the masses there had to be five elements; (1) a radio transmitter, (2) radio receivers in many homes, (3) programs that would be entertaining and have appeal to the public, (4) financing and organization for this new medium and finally, (5) the sale of advertising to support the continued operation of the radio station.

Initially, licensing of radio broadcasting stations was done by the Department of Commerce, then by the Federal Radio Commission and, finally, in 1934 the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) which is still in charge today.

Experiments in wireless broadcasting increased about 1910 and consisted of experimental stations and two-way telegraph. It played an important role in communications during World War I, 1914-1918. The first commercial broadcast stations, WWJ in Detroit and KDKA in Pittsburgh, went on the air in 1920. It is widely believed that KDKA was actually first.

In the year of my birth, 1922, commercial stations started sprouting up and limited network broadcasting began. I was 17 days old on January 19, 1922 when WMC in Memphis, Tennessee received a permit from the U. S. Department of Commerce to install and operate a 500 watt radio broadcasting station. Installation complete, WMC began regular broadcasts one year later in January, 1923. WMC is still broadcasting on AM and FM radio, and since 1948 on Television. Interestingly, in 1948, WMC television was my first cable channel and I will touch on this here.

On November 28, 1947 WMC received a license from the Federal Communications Commission to construct and operate a television station and transmitted their first experimental test pattern signals in the fall of 1948. By now I was bored with radio as it had ceased to be a challenge and was just a way to earn a living. So, from my radio shop in Tuckerman, Arkansas, the announcement of WMC's television station was exciting news for me. In order to learn as much as I could about television, I flew my airplane back and forth to Memphis many times during 1947 and 1948 to watch the tower, transmitter, microwave link and studio installation. I was obsessed to learn as much as I could about television. Between these flights to Memphis I was constructing my own tall tower in Tuckerman, Arkansas with a custom antennae array and amplifier to receive WMCT's signals when they went on the air. This was the first tower I had ever constructed and I could not have done it without the help of my very able and competent assistant, Louis French. It was the first tower we had ever built and it's a wonder we didn't kill ourselves!

Early on I became close friends with WMCT's chief engineer Ed "Pop" Frase, Sr., station manager Henry "Hank" Slavik and many others of the WMCT staff. They were very interested in my own receiving tower and installation at my shop in Tuckerman and were anxious to learn how well I would receive their television signal. My friendship with WMCT personnel continued throughout the years as I continued to expand into cable television. My Tuckerman project was ambitious and somewhat speculative, since my receiving tower was about 90 miles from WMCT's transmitting tower. This distance was considered too far for dependable television reception and, indeed, my television pictures were

at times marginal. However, people would come from miles around to just look at the old Indian head test pattern. "It's a miracle," they would exclaim. Some didn't believe the pictures actually came through the air and thought that I was pulling some kind of a trick.

This reminds me of back in 1938 (at age 16) when I was the projectionist at a movie theater in Des Arc, Arkansas. I stayed at Mrs. Smith's Boarding House, paying \$1.00 per day for a room and three meals. If I missed a meal or spent the night away, Mrs. Smith would deduct 25¢ for each. She considered the meals worth 25¢ each and the room worth 25¢ per night. Difficult to imagine these prices today! All meals were served on a long table, family style, and they were very good. Just a few years before I began as a projectionist, all movies were silent, however there were some with sound from phonograph records that were synchronized with the film. Prior to my moving to Des Arc I was a part-time projectionist at a theater in England, Arkansas. The "Motiograph Deluxe" projection equipment there had turntables for sound on disc as well as "sound-on-film" heads. "Talkies," as they were called, became increasingly popular from about 1929 with the development of sound-on-film. It was my policy to give free first-time admission to anyone who had never witnessed a talking picture. One elderly gentleman at Mrs. Smith's Boarding House had never seen a "talkie." Many times I would tell him what show was playing that night and offer him free admission. He would always decline and say, "You can never convince me that those shadows on the wall can talk."

Back to WMC television - From my Tuckerman, Arkansas tower I installed 17 TV outlets in our television display, one outlet in the nearby American Legion building and another to my first paying subscriber, the Carl Toler family about a block away. Another interesting aspect is that Carl Toler was the depot agent and telegrapher at the local Missouri Pacific Railroad station, sending and receiving messages by telegraphic code for both the railroad and Western Union. Toler was using the exact same technology and equipment, developed by Marconi and Morse, when he became my first television cable subscriber. As he and his family watched WMCT's first test pattern and program transmissions in September and October of 1948, neither the Toler family nor myself realized that we were making history and that they were Arkansas' first paying cable subscriber, and also one of the world's first.

We stay in touch with Carl Toler's widow, Naomi Toler and their daughter, Carolyn who live in Louisiana. Their son, Jerry lives in Texas. We are also in touch with one of Carl's brothers, John Toler, who also was a railroad employee, now retired and living near us.

Jumping ahead briefly to the 1960's, cable television was dramatically changed by the introduction of satellite technology. No longer were we limited to three, five or twelve channels of television. I used to spend days searching for suitable antenna receiving sites for cable television. Years later satellites eliminated this. No longer did I have to design and construct massive rhombic antennae arrays covering several acres of land and 500 foot tall towers since now we could receive many channels by use of parabolic dishes located most anywhere we wanted them to be. No longer did we have to depend on microwave towers and coaxial cable for network distribution to broadcast stations. But this is all covered in more detail in some of my other writings and I need to continue here on the subject of radio.

1998 update: As we have become more and more dependent on satellites, I have often wondered about the projected life and vulnerability of these 20th century

marvels: There are basically three orbits but possibly the geosynchronous satellites that are at 22,300 miles above the earth carry the most information. (Other satellites orbit at 380 and 540 miles.) I have often wondered whether or not an enemy could knock out our entire satellite system with rockets. The results would be devastating. So far, satellites have proven very useful and dependable until recently when Westar 4 went berserk, shutting down millions of pagers, credit card operated gasoline pumps and other communications. However, service was quickly restored when they switched to another satellite.

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By 1925 radio broadcasting had become a major source of home entertainment and my father had moved us from my birthplace of Little Rock to England, Arkansas where he opened a business and continued his radio experiments. It is here that both my younger sisters were born, Dorothy in 1925 and Norma Jeanne in 1928.

NBC launched the first nationwide radio network on June 27, 1927 by linking 50 stations in 24 states. The initial network broadcast originated before a crowd of 150,000 gathered at the Washington Monument to see and hear President Calvin Coolidge present the Distinguished Flying Cross to America's newest hero, Charles A. Lindberg, for his historic May 20-21, 1927 solo trans-Atlantic flight. This broadcast is reported to have lasted from noon to midnight and featured many remote pickups.

1927 was also the year of the "Great Flood" and the waters completely cut England off from the outside world. Many homes were inundated or isolated and ours was so threatened that Dad built scaffolding to raise all of our furniture and household items from the floor to near the ceiling. Dad temporarily moved us into a second-story apartment in a downtown building which was loaned to us by a dentist friend of Dad's. During the flood, England's only contact with the outside world was radio but radio news seemed to be inadequate at this time and people still wanted news from the print media. A friend of Dad's, local pilot Johnny Stover, flew his WW-I Jenny bi-plane to Little Rock each day, when weather permitted, for newspapers that we watched him drop on the main downtown intersection in England. From our second-story temporary apartment we watched as people madly scrambled for the newspapers, eager for news from the outside world. In thinking back about this, this eagerness for print news tells me something about the lack of radio coverage in this era. In other words, evidently radio had not yet reached a dominant role in news coverage as had the print media.

In England, my multi-talented dad had a radio, jewelry, watch and optometry shop. He was also a very talented musician and owned a Stradivarius violin. I recall us looking through the sound holes in the violin to see Stradivarius's signature. Despite my young age, I clearly recall Dad taking me to his shop many times and it was with great interest that I watched him work. I was very proud of my dad and vowed to emulate him and his professions when I grew up.

It was prior to and during the 1920's when my dad started his radio experimenting. According to my grandmother, and later from my own memory of family talk, Dad was retained by RCA Victor and ultimately achieved for them 18 patents in the early development of radio. I do not know how much RCA paid him.

I clearly recall my dad's work on his inventions. To the distress of Mother and Grandma, he kept the large dining room table covered with his schematic drawings and radio parts which he built. So we dined on the kitchen table. I recall the

patience with which Dad wound coils. For instance, he would choose the right diameter glass bottle or jar, wrap it with some kind of insulating material and carefully wind his wire coil. He would then paint the coiled wires with shellac. I remember that it took him days or weeks to make a coil as he would apply several coats of shellac and wait a day or so for each coat to thoroughly dry. When he was satisfied with the results he would break out the glass "form" leaving the rigid coil intact. I also recall the directional antennae that he wound on wooden forms that he made. These are called "loop" antennae and his were square in shape.

In my mind I can still clearly picture Dad's shop where he worked at his four trades of optometry, jewelry, watchmaking and radio and phonograph sales and service. I would watch him work at his bench. He had a jeweler's lathe which he used to make parts and he used the "blow-pipe" method of soldering which has been replaced by bottled oxygen in modern times. Dad was very talented. I recently located records from the Arkansas Board of Optometry proving that he began his practice in optometry in Arkansas prior to 1915.

In his shop there were radios that he built himself and also brands such as Atwater Kent, Philco and RCA, which were manufactured in the 20's and 30's. Later, in the 30's and 40's I repaired many of these types of radios myself. In 1937, at age 15, I replaced an audio driver transformer in a console RCA radio for the L. E. Bentley family in England, Arkansas. They told me that they had purchased this radio from my father. I was quite proud to have repaired a radio that my deceased father had sold some ten years earlier.

Following my mother's death in 1929, we moved from England back to Little Rock. Among our best friends in Little Rock were the O. E. Goodwin family who lived at 1411 Gaines Street. Mr. Goodwin was a carpenter and cabinet maker. One of my sisters was named for their only child, Dorothy. Dorothy Goodwin married Kenneth Moseley and she and her father worked at Stiff's Jewelers in Little Rock at the same time that Janet and I had a jewelry business there from 1975 to 1980. What did we name our jewelry business? DAVCO, of course! Dorothy and her father lived in Little Rock until their recent deaths. Her son, Kenneth, Jr. is also a jeweler and still lives in Little Rock. I clearly recall the Goodwins telling me about my dad and his radio experiments in the early 1920's. Though there is no way of proving this, they told me that Dad built the first radio in Little Rock and that people came from miles around to see and hear it. In contrast to today, early radios required a good aerial and ground. The Goodwins told me that Dad strung his aerial out in the attic and that he poked his ground wire down the kitchen sink drain. The Goodwins told me that they followed Dad's radio experiments with great interest. They told me that Dad used earphones on his early radios and one of the comments from listeners was "It's amazing, if we're quiet we can hear it across the room."

Prior to the development of regeneration and superheterodyne circuitry, these radios used "TRF" circuitry, or "tuned radio frequency." They required careful tuning of gangs of variable capacitors, usually three in number. These three knobs had to be tuned back and forth in sequence until the strongest signal was heard. They were still around in the 30's, so I was quite familiar with them. Of course, radios used vacuum tubes until the recent advent of transistors and solid-state components which were developed but not widely used until the 50's. During the 60's and 70's tiny transistors and printed circuit boards had all but replaced the large vacuum tubes and hand wired components in radios, televisions and other electronic equipment. A September 7, 1998 news release stated that Texas Instruments had developed "semi-conductor technology based on miniscule

transistors so small that 400 million could fit onto a chip the size of a fingernail." I was fortunate to have lived and worked throughout this period of vast significant development and progress in radio and television.

Dad was always a success and provided for us quite well. Prior to his death in Little Rock in 1930 we always had indoor plumbing, electricity and a full time live-in maid. We never wanted for anything and I always had plenty of toys. Dad always had a new car. I have a photo of us posing by a model "T" touring car while on vacation near Diamond Cave at Jasper, Arkansas in the early 20's. The year before Mother died I recall Dad bringing home a brand new 1928 Ford touring car, and to the best of my memory he paid \$500 cash for it. He was anxious to take us for a ride and he drove us at 60 miles per hour on a gravel road. Mother and Grandma were very frightened!

I strongly believe that much of Dad's income came from the Radio Corporation of America for his radio experiments and patent work.

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I'll briefly depart from the subject of this writing to detail what happened to us three children following our parent's deaths until I was involved in radio in my early to mid-teens. It was in the Great Depression when Herbert Hoover was President and stock values fell dramatically, banks and businesses closed and many people lost their fortunes. Suicides were common among men who lost everything.

Mother died in 1929 at age 26 from peritonitis and pneumonia following a ruptured appendix. Unfortunately, antibiotics did not exist back then. Dad never left her hospital room for her entire six week stay. Following her death he lost it, became despondent and did strange things that were totally out of character. His untimely death occurred just 11 months after Mom's. I was barely 8 years old at this time and my two sisters were ages 5 and 2. Grandmother told me not to worry because Dad had left us financially well off. Within a couple of weeks we learned otherwise. As I said, this was in the middle of the Great Depression and somehow during this 11 month period Dad had managed to lose everything and had even dropped his insurance premiums. Now, our only income was a monthly check in the amount of \$20 which Grandmother received from the government for the loss of one of her sons in WW-I. The four of us couldn't live in Little Rock on \$20 a month so we moved to Cabot and rented a home for \$5 a month. My grandmother, my mother and her two bothers grew up on a farm east of Cabot.

In other words, at the time of Dad's death, we went from modest affluence to absolute poverty overnight. Even in the depression years Grandma's \$20 monthly pension was not near enough. For the first time in my life we had no electricity and I studied by kerosene lamp. For the first time we had no indoor plumbing and had to use a "two-holer" out back and bathe in a #3 galvanized wash tub. Having no running water, we drew water in a bucket attached to a rope and pulley from a cistern on the back porch. Grandma was ill and bedfast for much of the time prior to her death which prevented me from going to school since I had to take care of her and my two sisters the best I could. I continued my education at home through the understanding and generosity of school teachers who loaned me the school text books through the 12th grade and also many library books. We knew what it was to be hungry and very, very poor. There were no welfare, social programs or food stamps at that time. We lived under these conditions for five years from 1930 until our grandmother's death on February 19, 1935.

By then I was 13 years old and my sisters were 10 and 7 years old. Then, for a short time we were moved about to live with various families for brief periods, finally being sent to live with a family (relatives whom we had never seen) in Demopolis, Alabama where all three of us were severely beaten and abused. We all ran away within a few months and ended up back in our home state of Arkansas.

Beginning about 1936, my two sisters, Dorothy and Norma Jeanne, spent the balance of their school years in the Southern Christian Orphan's Home in Morrilton, Arkansas. I moved about considerably and lived with a number of different families for relatively brief periods. The wisdom imparted to us by our grandmother, plus the hardships we suffered in our youth gave us a sense of values and appreciation that, I fear, is not often found in many children of today who are generally well cared for and often adversely influenced by television, their peers and drugs.

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Desiring to follow in my father's footsteps, I always had a keen interest in electricity and radios. I read anything I could obtain on the subjects, tinkered with and studied radios and built simple crystal sets at a very early age. By age 14 I was back in England, Arkansas and was seriously engaged in repairing radios, juke boxes and bicycles, and painting signs, anything I could work at to get by in those hard depression years. I also worked part time as relief projectionist at a theatre which was owned by J. F. Norman, head of the Arkansas Association of Independent Theater Owners. It was a very plush theater with the most modern projection equipment and I was fortunate to gain this experience.

When first moving back to England I lived for a while with Orville V. Brown and his wife Evie. O. V. owned the radio and bicycle shop. He was glad for me to move in with them and I was glad for the opportunity to continue to get more radio experience. O. V. told me that he and my dad had been very close friends before Dad died. My meeting O. V. was by chance. When he learned who I was he hugged me and told me that Dad taught him everything he knew about radio.

For reasons I do not care to discuss, O. V. was away much of the time and I practically ran the shop. Also, he figured that my room and board was adequate pay, so I had no spending money. He did pay me \$2.00 per week for operating the projectors at the theater but about half the time he would "forget" to pay me. For these and other reasons, including my desire to have my own radio shop, I decided to leave the Browns and went to live with L. E. and Betty Bentley (who were also friends of my family) and their two daughters, Dorothy and Elsie. I worked in their Mobil gas station for my room and board but they generously allowed me to set up my radio repair shop in their partially completed attic. They also allowed me to continue painting signs and other side line work. It was here that I built a small broadcast transmitter and played records in the early morning hours before opening the gas station. The man I repaired juke boxes for would give me old records. My theme song was Cab Calloway's "Wake Up And Live."

1998 update: Calloway, known as the "Hep Cat" sang and played music right to the end, dying in May, 1994 at age 86. I followed his career and have many newspaper articles about this famous entertainer.

My transmitter was very low power and barely covered the city. I had no license but my illegal operation was never discovered by the FCC. The Federal

Communications Commission was an infant back then and did not have the facilities to completely enforce the licensing law.

Only us older folks will remember the radio entertainers of the 20's, 30's and 40's. Despite the fact that most of these early radio entertainers have passed on, a few are still around. Among those no longer with us are comedians Fred Allen, Jack Benny, Eddie Cantor, George Burns and Gracie Allen, Charlie McCarthy and Edgar Bergen. Who can forget the "Amos 'n Andy" show, "Lum and Abner," "Fibber McGee and Mollie," "The Great Gildersleeve," "Our Miss Brooks," "Duffy's Tavern," etc., etc. Then there were the famous orchestras such as Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Harry James, Glenn Miller, Guy Lombardo, etc., etc. Radio dramas included "Inner Sanctum," "Buck Rogers," "The Lone Ranger," "The Shadow" and "Superman." Radio even had soap operas and old timers will recall "The Guiding Light," "John's Other Wife," "Ma Perkins," "One Man's Family," and "Stella Dallas," to name a few. None of these were vulgar or offensive as are some of the soap operas of today. Families would sit around and stare at the radio while listening to these shows. It was "television without a picture!"

The few entertainers from that era who are still with us include Bob Hope at age 95 who is still entertaining a bit. Hope is famous for his unselfish time and effort entertaining military troops worldwide. He was recently recognized for 50 years of troop entertaining and one of a class of six U. S. Naval vessels was named the "USS Bob Hope" in his honor. The "George Burns and Gracie Allen" show was popular from the late 20's until 1954 when Gracie died. Janet and I recently saw George Burns while visiting Hollywood. We were guests of an old cable friend, Burt Harris, at Hollywood's prestigious Hillcrest Country Club where George dines most every day. Burns at age 98, was booked for three days at Ceasar's Palace in Las Vegas to celebrate his 100th birthday. The event would take place on January 19, 20 and 21, 1996 and every show was sold out at \$100 per ticket!

(1998 update: George Burns didn't quite make it to 100 years of age. He died in 1996 shortly before his 100th birthday. Bob Hope is still around. He was born in London in 1903 and, at age 95, was recently knighted by the Queen of England.)

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The book by Tom Lewis, "Empire of the Air" reported that by 1923 radio had become a full fledged craze. What began with a single station in 1920, KDKA in Pittsburgh, grew to 30 stations in 1922 and 536 by 1923. Also, there were 500,000 households with radio receivers.

Earlier, I mentioned American inventor Lee De Forest who was known as "the father of radio." De Forest was a devout Christian but in my research I have found no evidence that he used radio as a vehicle for religion. Instead, his early emphasis was culture, such as his desire to hear opera broadcast into every home. However, there were many entrepreneurs who were not so concerned with quality broadcasting.

As the number of radio broadcast stations and home receivers grew, there were not-so-honest preachers and other scam artists who quickly realized the vast audience they could reach via the airwaves as opposed to live audiences in church buildings or tents. For fear of losing their broadcast license, some legitimate radio stations would not carry their programs so these con artists moved just across the Rio Grande River into Mexico where the Federal Radio Commission

(now FCC) could not touch them. They needed radio transmitters with great power, more than the 50,000 watts maximum allowed by the FCC. With directional antenna arrays and awesome power they scattered their messages to gullible audiences throughout the United States and Canada. Though their transmitters were just across the border in Mexico, they always had U. S. Post Office Box numbers in border towns such as Brownsville, Del Rio, Laredo, El Paso, Nogales or San Diego.

I listened to these preachers and others every once in a while just to see what they were offering. One preacher, for a contribution to his radio ministry, offered a small bottle of "holy water" guaranteed to be from the River Jordan. I'll bet it was right out of the Rio Grande River! Also offered were "prayer cloths" and other religious trinkets. Typically, one of these preachers would get worked into a frenzy and offer the holy water or other trinket "absolutely free" to his devout listeners. "Please don't send money," he would scream, "this is absolutely free to all who believe in the power of God." "Just send your name and address in an envelope to Brother Harley, P. O. Box 777, Del Rio, Texas." "As I said, these are absolutely free." "However," he would hastily add, "some of my listeners insist on enclosing a donation to our ministry in their envelope. If your prayer cloth, holy water, etc. does not arrive within a month or two, you will understand that we have to send it first to those who send a donation."

Radio scams weren't limited to religion. They included fortune tellers, astrologers, and one program offered help to listeners in solving their bizarre personal problems. Broadcast entrepreneurs were selling just about every product or service one could think of, some legitimate, some not.

Speaking of bizarre, I vividly recall one particular entrepreneur named Dr. John R. Brinkley who broadcast regularly, touting a surgical operation that would restore male virility. At his hospital in Milford, Kansas he implanted glands from young goats into gullible men who fell for the scam! It is recorded that patients by the thousands flocked to Brinkley's hospital where they were privileged to inspect his flock of goats and select their own goat for their rejuvenating gland transplant. I suppose the gentlemen tried to select a goat that looked particularly virile to them.

Dr. Brinkley was broadcasting from KFKB in Milford, Kansas when the Federal Radio Commission revoked his station's license in 1930. Doctor Brinkley was not deterred. He simply moved his broadcast operations to Del Rio, Texas where he set up radio station XERA, a 50,000 watt transmitter, just across the Rio Grande River in Mexico. It was reported that a clever engineer increased the power to 150,000 watts which allowed Doctor Brinkley to broadcast his message throughout the United States and into Canada, obliterating less powerful stations. Later, Brinkley was a partner in the even more powerful 250,000 watt XELO in Juarez, just across the border from El Paso.

These super powerful radio transmitters were a nuisance as they often interfered with local stations when I was working on radios. Besides their awesome power, they ignored side-band suppression and their signal splattered off-frequency within 50 miles or so of their location. One day in the early 50's I was flying my airplane up the Rio Grande Valley and one of these maverick stations had so much power and off-frequency splattering that they rendered my aircraft navigation equipment useless.

It is impossible for me to close this segment about the early days of radio without a brief transition into television. With the advent of television in the late 40's

and early 50's, these radio hucksters saw a far better vehicle for their scams. Now they could not only be heard but could be seen. Then, when satellite technology appeared in the 1960's these television ministries could now be heard and seen worldwide. "Wow! People will be sending us money from everywhere in the world," they exclaimed! They did, and still do. Television viewers note that there are numerous TV preachers on the air, but those with satellite dishes know that the number of them is astounding.

Most everyone has heard and seen some of the vast number of present-day television preachers who prey on their audience to "SEND MONEY." Notwithstanding the likes of Jim and Tammy Baker, Jimmy Swaggart and others who have been exposed and/or convicted of fraud, there are still dozens who continue to bilk their followers and get away with it. I quickly add that there are some television preachers who are honest and sincere and do good work, but the stigma of those who have been exposed reigns over them all.

Just a bit more about television programs of today. Those who have satellite dishes will know what I'm talking about. Cable systems are careful to not carry offensive satellite channels. Though we receive a lot of channels, many are not worth watching. I often "channel surf" on our satellite dish in the wee small hours after midnight. Though there are a few programs worth watching, here is what dominates the stations:

1. More preachers than you would realize who spend more time begging for money than they do preaching. Some have elaborate stage sets, bands and sound equipment, some with wives having huge hairdos, too much makeup and too much jewelry.
2. 30 minute commercials (called infomercials) with audience participation, selling everything from get rich quick schemes to kitchen appliances.
3. "Genuine" psychics with a 900 number who will solve all your personal problems and predict your future.
4. Sexy females with expensive 900 numbers who will talk dirty with anyone over 18 for \$3.00 to \$5.00 per minute.
5. Home shopping clubs selling everything from jewelry to clothing. Having been in the jewelry and gemstone business, I can say that much of their jewelry is no bargain.
6. Fitness programs with well built men and women performing endless exercises that we are supposed to follow.
7. People hawking myriad types of exercise equipment on 30 minute commercials.
8. Talk show hosts featuring and exploiting all kinds of misfit people. These are disgusting
9. Music videos. These may have appeal to some, but I usually find them boring and tasteless.
10. Men alleging to be self-made millionaires spend thirty minutes trying to convince the television audience that they, too, can become millionaires if they will purchase his tapes, books, etc. If he's already a millionaire, why does he need to sell this stuff?

There are more, and these programs monopolize the channels, leaving little of substance worth watching.

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In my early teens I was a part-time theater projectionist and also repaired radios and painted signs. I also worked in a gas station pumping gas, fixing flats, washing and greasing cars. There were two grades of gasoline back then. Regular was amber colored and sold for 16¢ per gallon. Ethyl (high test) was red in color and sold for 18¢ per gallon. By age 17 I was a theater manager and this is what brought me to Tuckerman, Arkansas, home of my first cable subscriber. Times were still tough and I continued to pursue radio repairs, painting and photography in my effort to make a living. Along with thousands of other young men my life was interrupted for three years and three months by World War II. However, I was fortunate that fate still allowed me to continue in my various chosen fields of work during military service. My first tenure of military duty was with the Signal Corps where I was privileged to maintain aircraft radio and electronics equipment as supervisor of a Signal Corps repair facility. Though still primitive by today's standards, World War II (1939-1945) radio technology had advanced far beyond its World War I equipment and performance capabilities. Following my Signal Corps duty I joined the United States Navy and was stationed near San Diego, California. I remained in the navy service for two years, being discharged in February, 1946 after the 1945 surrender of the Germans and Japanese. It was impossible to support my family on Navy pay so I worked spare time in a local radio repair shop to earn extra money. I also worked in a commercial photographic dark room in San Diego and as a part-time theatre projectionist.

At my navy base I did have the opportunity to feed several NBC radio network shows with my equipment. This was quite a thrill since by then NBC had grown to a giant network of radio stations. My Navy duties also required theater work, photography, art, silk screen work and writing. I was also on the staff of the local newspaper. The highlight of my navy years was being able to meet and work with many famous movie and radio stars of that era and to work in five featurette movies for Warner Brothers, primarily playing in a harmonica trio.

Following my discharge I returned to Tuckerman, Arkansas and continued radio sales and repairs right up to the advent of television in the late forties. Most radios that came into my shop were battery operated since no rural electricity existed at that time. I tried to keep console radios out of my shop, repairing them in the home. I recall repairing as many as 60 or 70 table model radios in a single day.

Back home, post war times were still tough and it was still necessary for me to continue painting signs, doing theatre work and photography. I also found time to do a 30 minute daily radio show which I taped and sent to KBTM in Jonesboro, the closest radio station at that time. It was a home talent show and I selected the best musicians and formed a band. I was the drummer and we played for dances and personal appearances.

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So, despite the rapid growth of television and its massive audience, radio still survives quite well. Many radio stations have adopted specialized formats and both AM and FM stations thrive throughout the nation and the world in the

conventional long-wave and also short-wave frequency bands. We all know that radio is not limited to commercial radio broadcasting stations which are supported solely by the sale of advertising. Radio uses have expanded beyond imagination and satellite technology has made the world smaller in both radio and television. Cellular telephone service is enjoying phenomenal growth. There are business, military, aviation and amateur communications. Not just voice, but transmission of all kinds of services including digital data. Thanks to satellite technology, we now have GPS (Global Position System) which pinpoints our position to within a few feet anywhere in the world! It now serves all types of transportation in the air, on land and the sea. Small, inexpensive GPS receivers are even carried by hunters and hikers. Satellites provide us instant, direct-dial telephone service worldwide. Military and civilian communications use a wide variety of radio facilities and equipment. Business and industry are linked by radio signals via satellite.

Technological advancements have given us awesome shrinking of sizes in radios and other electronic equipment. We can now hold in the palm of a hand equipment which we could barely lift just a few decades ago. Not only has size been dramatically reduced, but today's equipment is far more advanced, functional and reliable. Both communications and navigation equipment in my airplane are overwhelming as compared to the meager equipment I had when I was first involved in aviation radio during World War II. My first airplane, 52 years ago, had no radio equipment at all, whereas my present airplane has 720 channels for two-way communication plus 200 channels for VOR navigation and 4096 channels in my radar transponder. And, due to its small size, this equipment is duplicated for safety. In addition, I have a small, hand-held portable emergency backup unit with all these same communication and navigation channels! During WW-II we had huge and separate transmitters and receivers which typically had only five channels of communications and no VOR navigation. There had to be a crystal for each transmitting and each receiving frequency, whereas today with synthesized technology only one crystal is required.

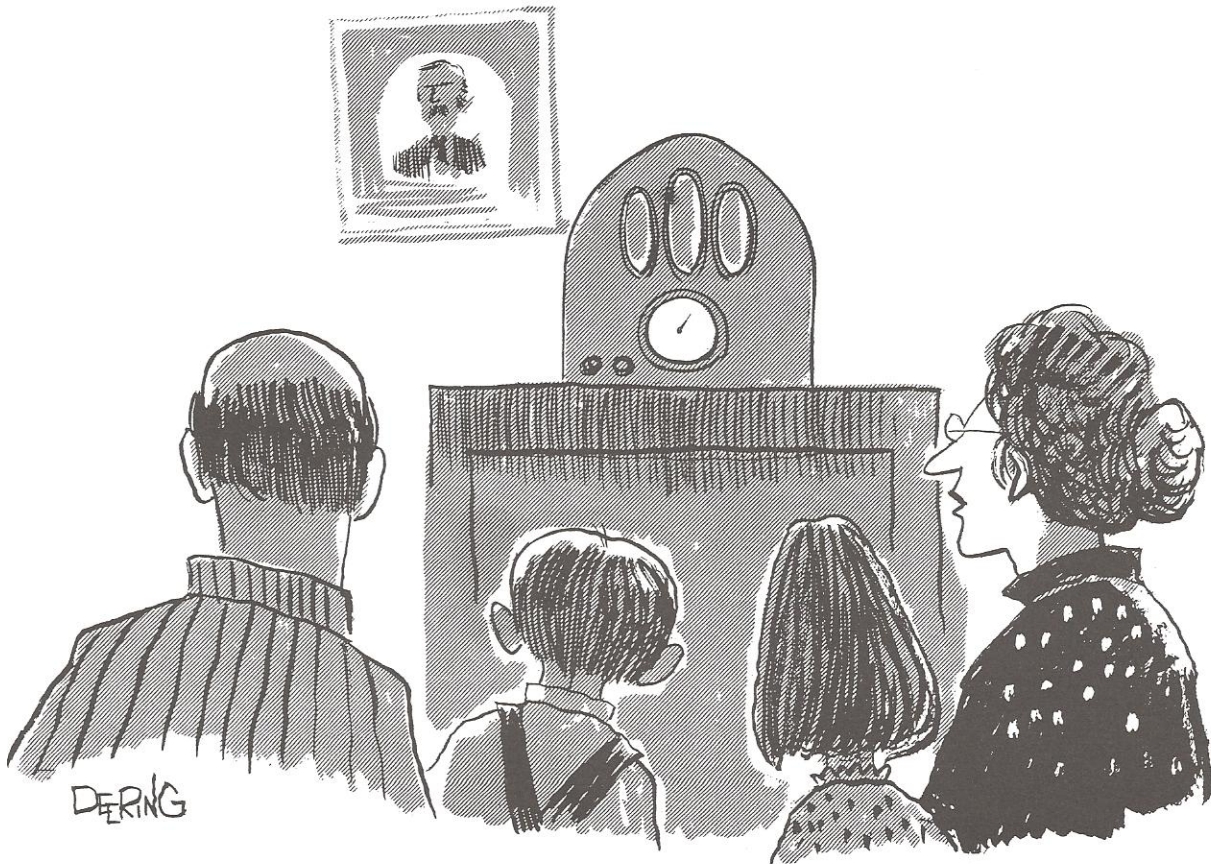
(Update in 1998: After 52 years and 17,000 hours of flying, I voluntarily grounded myself in 1997 due to health problems. I owned nine different airplanes during these 52 years and giving up flying was a very emotional experience for me. As Janet and I watched our beautiful twin-engine airplane soar away from the Little Rock Municipal Airport, I cried. Our broker told us that it was purchased by a South American who is believed to be operating it in Venezuela and Brazil for passenger and freight service. As I write this update in May, 1998, I am very slowly recovering from 74 days in the hospital and four major surgeries.

We are currently forming the "James Yates Davidson Cable Television Foundation" and turning our large home into a museum. It is our desire that everything in our home, both personal and cable items, be left intact and that docents will take cable television people from all over the country on tours by invitation. This is the legacy that Janet and I strongly want to leave. At some time in the future, after Janet and I have passed on, the James Yates Davidson Cable Television Foundation and our home/museum will ultimately be donated to the National Cable Television Center and Museum at the University of Denver in Denver, Colorado.

In order to avoid being too boring, I have omitted many details of my long experience with radio and television. I am very proud to have been involved in the many facets of these mediums. I am fortunate to have lived and worked in this exciting era of incredible achievement and hope the reader enjoys this condensed review of my experiences with radio and television which includes brief excursions into other facets of my personal life and family. Having witnessed so much progress in radio and television equipment, it makes me wonder what we will see in the future. There's much being currently reported about the information "super highway" and "interactive systems." Right now many miles of fiber optics cable are being installed in this area and all over the country. Back in my early days in cable systems we used coaxial cable which, typically, would require an amplifier every 1,000 feet. With fiber optics, amplifiers may be spaced 18 miles apart!

Again, I sincerely hope you have enjoyed my recollections. Thank you.

James Y. Davidson



Before television, families would sit in their living rooms and stare at their radio while listening to soap operas, news and comedians such as George Burns and Gracie Allen, Lum and Abner, Amos and Andy, Fibber McGee and Mollie, etc.

I call it television without the picture!



Made in the late fifties, this photo shows the typical Jimmy Davidson on the run boarding his twin-engine airplane to call on cable customers and deliver coaxial cable and equipment. Davidson flew day and night and considered his airplanes among his most important business tools.



1946

In 1946, J. Y. "Jimmy" Davidson got his first airplane, a two-seat Aeronica Champion, (above) which he used both for business and pleasure. He also picked up a few bucks hopping passengers out of hayfields on Sunday afternoons. It is this airplane that he flew back and forth to Memphis during 1947-48 due to his interest in television station WMCT's construction.

Some years and several airplanes later, Davidson is shown below in a much larger twin-engine airplane, delivering a load of amplifiers and equipment to a far away cable system. As this is written in 1997, Davidson is still flying and has owned a total of eight airplanes, the last four being twins. He has commercial, instrument and multi-engine licenses, and at one time operated a successful charter business.



1960

REDUCED COPY OF A HANDBILL
TOSSED BY JIMMY DAVIDSON
FROM HIS AIRPLANE IN JULY,
1947. THESE MULTI-COLORED
"TEASERS" WERE A PRELUDE
TO HIS DROPPING THE "ACTUAL"
SAUCERS A FEW DAYS LATER.
Dropping objects from an aircraft
these days (1990) would, no doubt,
be frowned upon by the FAA!

2000

"Flying Saucers"

WILL BE

OVER JACKSON COUNTY

NEXT SUNDAY!

ARE THEY FROM MARS? ? ?

ARE THEY FROM RUSSIA? ? ?

DO YOU WANT TO SEE A REAL
FLYING SAUCER?

Watch for them next Sunday Afternoon, July 12, over
The Newport Air Base and the Towns of Tuckerman,
Grubbs, Swifton and Alicia.

IF YOU LOOK YOU WILL SEE
SOME REAL "FLYING SAUCERS"

There will be a number of "LUCKY SAUCERS" and
if you happen to find one of these "LUCKY SAUCERS"
you will receive absolutely FREE, your choice of a bat-
tery or electric table model RADIO! There WILL BE
"LUCKY SAUCERS" over each town, so be sure and
watch for them as they float gently to the earth.

NOTICE

THE "SAUCERS" TELL YOU HOW AND WHERE
TO GET YOUR FREE RADIO.
WATCH FOR THEM!

Disc Mystery At Tuckerman Solved

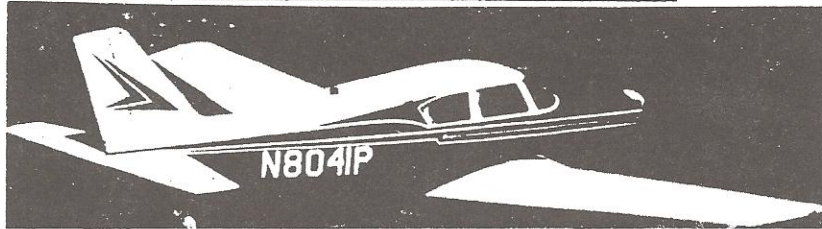
Tuckerman, July 8 (Spl). — Several "flying saucers" were seen here by a large crowd at a baseball game yesterday. The mystery discs apparently were dropped from a plane. They fell to earth not far from the spectators who discovered they were made of cardboard and bore the inscription "Courtesy Auto-Electric," a Tuckerman appliance store.

Pilot Jimmy Davidson of the Auto-Lectric stores conceived this promotional stunt to tie in with the "flying saucer" craze that is currently receiving wide media attention. While circling the ball park after the drop, Davidson reported that spectators scrambling on the field broke up the game until all saucers were recovered.

From his airplane, Davidson dropped two sizes of the "saucers" over towns within the store's trade area in Jackson and Lawrence counties. The smaller size was about 12" in diameter, while the large "saucer" was about 3 feet in diameter and painted silver. Only a few of the large, hand lettered "saucers" were dropped over each community, along with several hundred of the smaller versions. All were numbered and several with lucky numbers were dropped over each community. Persons finding "saucers" with lucky numnbers could present them to the appliance store for various prizes.

Davidson reported the promotional stunt a success.

HAY FIELD TAKE-OFF



They Said It Couldn't Be Done; Pilot Didn't Hear

"IF IT CAN'T BE FLOWN OUT, THE AIRCRAFT WILL HAVE TO BE DISMANTLED AND HAULED OUT BY TRUCK"

Batesville pilot Jimmy Davidson earned the gratitude of two Texas flyers and the admiration of a group of onlookers Monday afternoon when he made a successful take-off from a soft-ground and extremely bumpy hay field in Allen bottoms.

The two Texans, T. C. Stinson and R. L. Duncan, from McAllen, were forced down at 11 a. m. Sunday when they ran into a rain storm and were running out of gas. They failed to see the municipal airport some two miles from the hay field where they made the emergency landing.

A strip some 50-to-60-feet

wide was mown for the attempted take-off in the Piper Comanche. Davidson made several test runs back and forth on the strip, and at times the front wheel of the landing gear almost mired up in the soft, rutted ground.

But Davidson's first attempt to lift the craft into the air was successful. He flew the plane to the Batesville airport where Stinson and Duncan took over and continued on their trip to Chicago.

Before the take-off, a dozen onlookers — including several with flying experience — expressed skepticism because of the condition of the hay field.

Jimmy Davidson, owner of DAVCO Electronics and a number of cable television systems, was flying his airplane in Alabama and Mississippi, calling on cable customers. On a routine phone call to his office in Batesville, Arkansas he learned that two gentlemen had landed their airplane in a short, muddy hayfield on the north bank of White River and were awaiting his return in the hope that Davidson would fly it out for them. They were afraid to make the attempt themselves and no other local pilots would come to their aid. So, they just checked into a motel, where they waited several days for Davidson's return. "The aircraft was out of fuel", Davidson said, "I put just enough fuel in the tanks to safely fly it to the Batesville Airport, removed some damaged cowlings and anything aboard to lighten gross weight of the airplane. There was no risk - it was a piece of cake." The owners of the aircraft were, needless to say, very grateful and offered to pay Davidson for his services. Davidson declined payment. Several weeks later Davidson received several cases of canned goods from the two gentlemen who happened to own a canning factory in Texas.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL AVIATION AGENCY
WASHINGTON

Form Approved
Budget Bureau No. 01-1005

OPERATIONS SPECIFICATIONS

DAVCO ELECTRONICS CORPORATION

is a

COMMERCIAL AIR CARRIER

authorized to conduct air-taxi operations as an air carrier engaged in air transportation or commercial operation as a commercial operator, utilizing aircraft of 12,500 pounds or less maximum certificated takeoff weight, in accordance with the applicable provisions of Federal Aviation Regulations, Part 135, other FAR's, and the terms, conditions, and limitations contained herein.

Operations are authorized in the following categories and classes of aircraft under the conditions and within the area of operations authorized.

AIRPLANE MULTIENGINE LAND:

VFR AND IFR, DAY AND NIGHT,
PASSENGERS AND CARGO

AREA OF OPERATIONS

CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES, EXCLUDING ALASKA.

*Auto-pilot authorization (See below)

* - Use of an auto-pilot (Piper Altimatic II) installed in Piper N5829Y is authorized in lieu of second pilot when passengers are carried under IFR or in actual IFR weather conditions, and the pilot holds a current statement of competency letter for instrument flight using auto-pilot.

Effective date 10-2-70

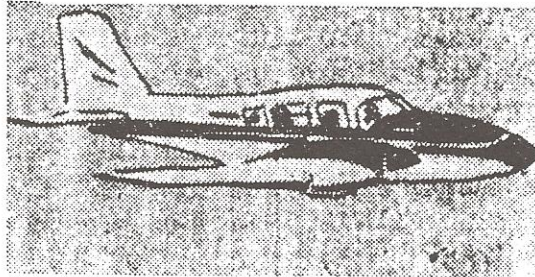
(8430)

Form FAA-1011 (5-67)
SW OP 3 (12/64)

AIR TAXI SERVICE

FLY ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

FAST



SAFE

**TWIN ENGINE, 6-SEAT
FULLY EQUIPPED AZTECS**

FAA APPROVED

We have met the safety requirements of the Federal Aviation Agency and have been awarded **OPERATING CERTIFICATE NO. SW-LIT-63T.**

PHONE FOR INFORMATION

Riverside 3-3816

DAVCO Electronics Corporation

AVIATION DIVISION

AIR TAXI SUCCESSFUL

Several months ago DAVCO Electronics Corporation, a local electronics firm, announced its newly formed Aviation Division and the opening of a Little Rock office for the company.

Jim Davidson, DAVCO president, said that since his firm first offered commercial charter service to the general public, a total of 111 charter flights has been made during August and September. Of this number 71 were in August and 40 so far this month.

"Most all of the trips have been out of our Little Rock office, Davidson remarked, "but we have made several out of Batesville and surrounding cities.

"We are quite happy with the success of our operation. All flights have been on schedule and none has been can-

celled due to weather. This, of course, is a result of our completely equipped aircraft.

"Our prime concern is to deliver our passengers quickly and safely, and we have overlooked nothing to achieve this. In addition to passenger traffic, we also have air freight."

Davidson admitted that "competition is keen" but that his company has been able to sell its service on its merits.

DAVCO flew eight persons from Little Rock to Fayetteville for the Arkansas-Tulsa game Saturday for a commercial airlines after one of its flights was cancelled.

Davidson said that he has been the pilot on many of the charter flights.

DAVCO is owner of the Community Antenna Company in Batesville.

Despite the fact that our charter operations were very successful, I had to cease operations after only a few months because it was interfering with our cable television businesses.



This photo was made in the mid-1970's in front of the Quapaw Towers in Little Rock, Arkansas. Left to right: Eddie Holland, Jimmy Davidson, Glen Jermstad and Craig Smith. Holland, a decorated World War II veteran was a pilot for then Governor Winthrop Rockefeller and later was director of the Arkansas Aeronautics Department for 18 years. Eddie and I shared flying our charter trips and Eddie also filled in for me in my cable related flying when I was not available.

Jermstad and Smith were also top level employees of Winthrop Rockefeller. Despite the fact that Rockefeller had a fleet of his own airplanes, he often chartered the DAVCO airplane when his own aircraft were busy.



Frank Evans and Paul Windham
Grenada, Mississippi



Ira Crosby, Indianola, Miss. 9/23/58



Paul Thompson, Robert Neathery,
Jim Davidson, Robert Harmon Joe
Bean and J. E. Wolf, posing with
one of their fine riding horses dur-
ing installation of towers for the
West Plains system. 1956.



Charles Reynolds & Jim Davidson
Commerce, Texas

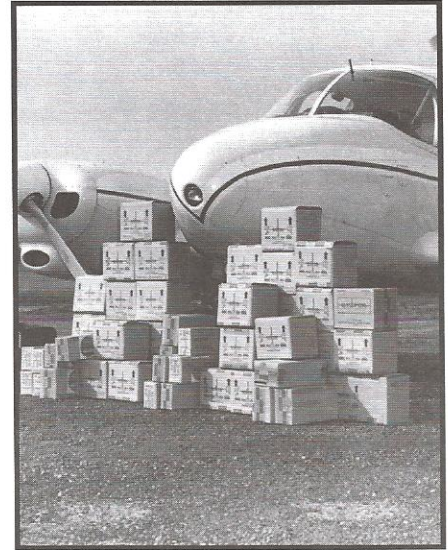


Tom Todd, Tuscaloosa, Alabama
at Batesville, 1963



Jim Davidson & Jewel Callaham,
Broken Bow, Oklahoma, 1963...

DAVCO USED IT'S AIRPLANES LIKE PICKUP TRUCKS!

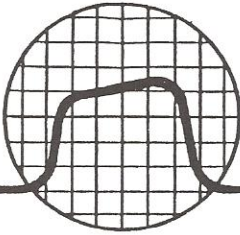


It's been so long ago and so much has happened in our lives since then that I sometimes have difficulty remembering names. We came across the photos on this and the opposite page and wanted to use them to demonstrate how we used our airplanes like trucks, hauling both passengers, coaxial cable and electronic equipment to cable customers far and wide. The gentleman in the upper left hand photo and with Jamie in the lower right hand photo is Tom Todd of Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Since we are about to load his golf clubs and some cable and equipment into my airplane, I assume he had visited us for some golf and shopping.

The lower left hand photo appears to be me with Virgil Jackson since one of his trucks is in the picture. I was delivering the head end for their Vidalia, Louisiana system. The photo was made at the nearest airport, Natchez, Mississippi, which is across the Mississippi River from Vidalia, Louisiana. Vidalia, Louisiana is not to be confused with Vidalia, Georgia of sweet onion fame! This was in 1963 and during this three month period we produced and delivered 47 racks of DAVCO's "Functional Design" head-ends.



Phillip Farr of McGehee, Arkansas is shown in the top photo beside a new head-end that I delivered in my airplane. The bottom photo shows me with son Jamie as we are about to load equipment for air delivery. I believe the photos on this and the opposite page to have been made in 1963. Over the years I owned a total of nine airplanes, the last four being twins with a cruising speed of about 200 miles per hour and a capacity of about one ton. On several occasions I used my airplanes as aerial ambulances to transport patients.



DAVCO ELECTRONICS CORPORATION

DISTRIBUTORS OF QUALITY RF & AUDIO ELECTRONIC COMPONENTS

PHONE RIVERSIDE 3-3816
POST OFFICE BOX 061

BATESVILLE, ARKANSAS



entron

September 10, 1963

Mr. Robert Jernigan
Hattiesburg Video
Post Office Box 1608
Hattiesburg, Mississippi

Dear Bob:

The tower crew will leave Oklahoma City next Monday, September 16 and should arrive in Biloxi Wednesday or Thursday. They will have as much of the tower as they can haul on one load. Their present plans are to double back and pick up the rest of your tower along with another one which they will drop off for us in Louisiana and come directly back to finish yours.

I suggest that you work out your installation details with them on their first trip. Also, that you take a look at the booms they bring in case any changes are indicated. In this way they can bring the necessary material on the second trip.

Very truly yours,

Dayco Electronics Corporation

Jim Davidson
Jim Davidson, President

jd/t

cc Dutch Jerome,
Utility Tower Company

ONE SOURCE FOR:

WHOLESALE ONLY

Surveys and Planning — Custom Antenna Design — Systems Engineering — Plant Construction — Electronic Equipment and Components
For Closed-Circuit Television, Community Antenna Systems, Industrial and Educational TV, Motels and Apartment Houses

PURCHASE ORDER
SOUTHERN CATV SYSTEMS, INC.

S 1142

GENERAL OFFICES

9570 WILSHIRE BOULEVARD • BEVERLY HILLS, CALIFORNIA

Davco Electronics Corporation
P. O. Box 861
Batesville, Arkansas

Invoice MUST Show This Order No.

DATE August 26, 1963

CHARGE AND SHIP TO:

Biloxi TV Cable System SYSTEM

c/o Tower Site Location STREET

Biloxi, Mississippi CITY, STATE

RENDER INVOICE IN DUPLICATE

AND MAIL ALL COPIES TO address as given in "Charge To" Instructions—See above.

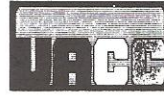
SHIPPING DATE	TERMS	VIA	QUANTITY	ARTICLES AND DESCRIPTION	Unit Price	AMOUNT
	<u>Cash</u>	<u>Best Way</u>				
			1	Steel Tower- 40" x 340', type 540 legs 2.875 O.D. bracing 1.3150 O.D., sections 20'. Designed for 120 mile winds with no ice load. One coat rust inhibitive paint, plus final coat to meet FAA/FCC Requirements. Galvanized eye & jaw type turnbuckles applied and locked to galvanized steel guylines. Inner and outer surface of tower shall be hot dipped galvanized. Anchors shall be I-beam type, set in concrete slab re-inforced with steel rods with earth fill. Includes erection on site, installation of all antennae and booms, complete electrical wiring to conform to CAA-A-3 with photo cell control, all materials, labor and freight included.		8,550.00

NO CHARGE FOR PACKING OR DRAYAGE ALLOWED UNLESS SO INDICATED. IF UNABLE TO DELIVER THE ARTICLES SPECIFIED ON THIS ORDER, NOTIFY US AT ONCE. GOODS DELIVERED TO OR RECEIVED BY US MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A DETAILED SHIPPING SLIP.
RIGHT IS HEREBY RESERVED TO CANCEL OR RECALL THIS ORDER IF DELIVERY IS NOT MADE WITHIN TIME SPECIFIED.
THIS ORDER IS GIVEN UNDER CONDITION THAT THE SELLER PROTECTS US AGAINST ALL LIABILITY OR EXPENSE BY REASON OF ANY PATENT OR TRADE MARK LITIGATION IN CONNECTION WITH THE GOODS PURCHASED ON THIS ORDER.
NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR GOODS DELIVERED UNLESS COVERED BY PROPERLY AUTHORIZED PURCHASE ORDER, NOT LIABLE FOR MERCHANDISE RECEIVED IN DAMAGED CONDITION.

ALL MERCHANDISE IS WARRANTED BY YOU TO BE SOUND AND OF HIGH QUALITY.
ALL MERCHANDISE ORDERED BY SAMPLE OR SPECIFICATION SHALL BE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL WHEN RECEIVED.

INVALID FOR AMOUNTS OVER \$1000 UNLESS SIGNED BY GENERAL MANAGER

*I wonder what a tower with these specifications would cost in 1998 dollars
as this book is being published?*
- JYD



UA Cablesystems
of Mississippi

200 West Washington Loop
PO Box 10
Biloxi MS 39533
601-374-5900

August 4, 1986

Mr. J.Y. Davidson
P.O. Box 8928
Naples, Florida 33941

Dear Jim:

Thanks for your letter and the autographed copies of the Camille books you published. They certainly brought back memories of a terrible storm.

The tower you sold for the initial system in Biloxi withstood Hurricane Camille and is still in use today. I am enclosing a copy of a TVC magazine with an article concerning the storm along with a copy of your letter to Bob Jernigan concerning the delivery of the tower and his purchase order to you.

Considering the original cost of the tower was \$8550.00. The system certainly got a value in that purchase.

As I mentioned in Atlanta, Vern Cooledge is now a Baptist preacher with a church somewhere in the Atlanta area. I do not have his phone number. However, the telephone operator should be able to provide it to you.

I have lost track of Bob Jernigan over the years and do not know where he is or if he is still in the cable TV business.

I enjoyed visiting with you and Mrs. Davidson in Atlanta and certainly hope that as you cruise the country in your motorhome you will include Biloxi in your stops.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'JF' or 'John F.', written in a cursive, flowing style.

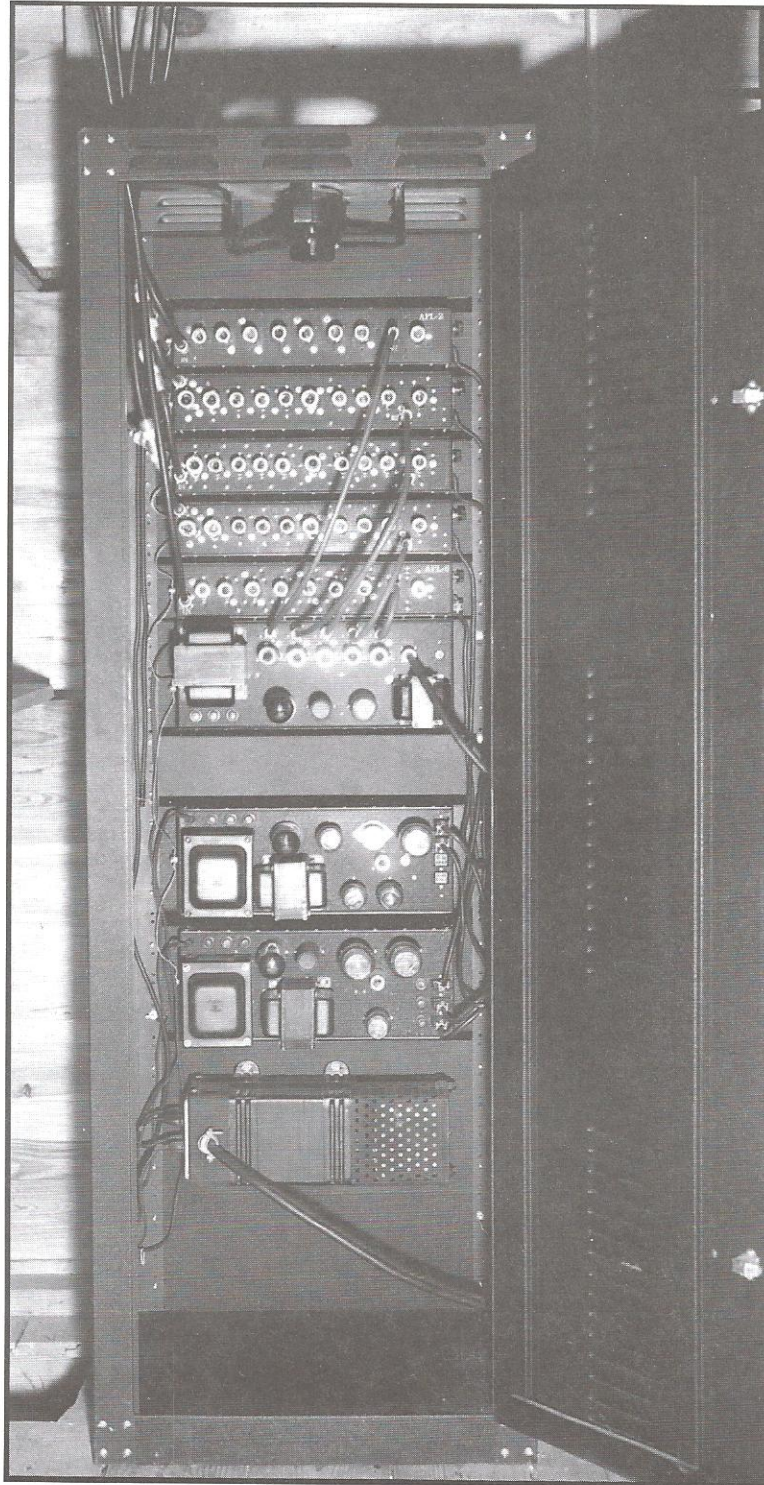
John F. Humphries



At the Gulfport Municipal Airport – late 1963



It took eight racks of our custom "Functional Design" head-end equipment for the Biloxi cable system. Bob Jernigan was the manager and Vern Coolidge was the chief engineer. Note the NCTA logo on the Biloxi cable truck.



One of hundreds of DAVCO's "Functional Design" head-ends. Most were in slanted open racks, but we made a few in vertical cabinets such this one which was for the Siloam Springs, Arkansas complete rebuild.

**- STEPPING BACK IN TIME -
WORLD WAR II - SIGNAL CORPS DAYS**



ROWS AND ROWS OF BRAND-NEW BT-13 VULTEES AWAIT THEIR CADET PILOTS. FOR MANY CADETS, THIS BASIC TRAINER WAS THE TRANSITIONAL STEP BETWEEN THE PRIMARY TRAINER, PT-17 AND THE ADVANCED TRAINER, AT-6.

As we all know, the Japanese made a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, destroying most of our naval fleet and killing many military personnel and civilians. I clearly recall this day. We were at war with the Japanese.

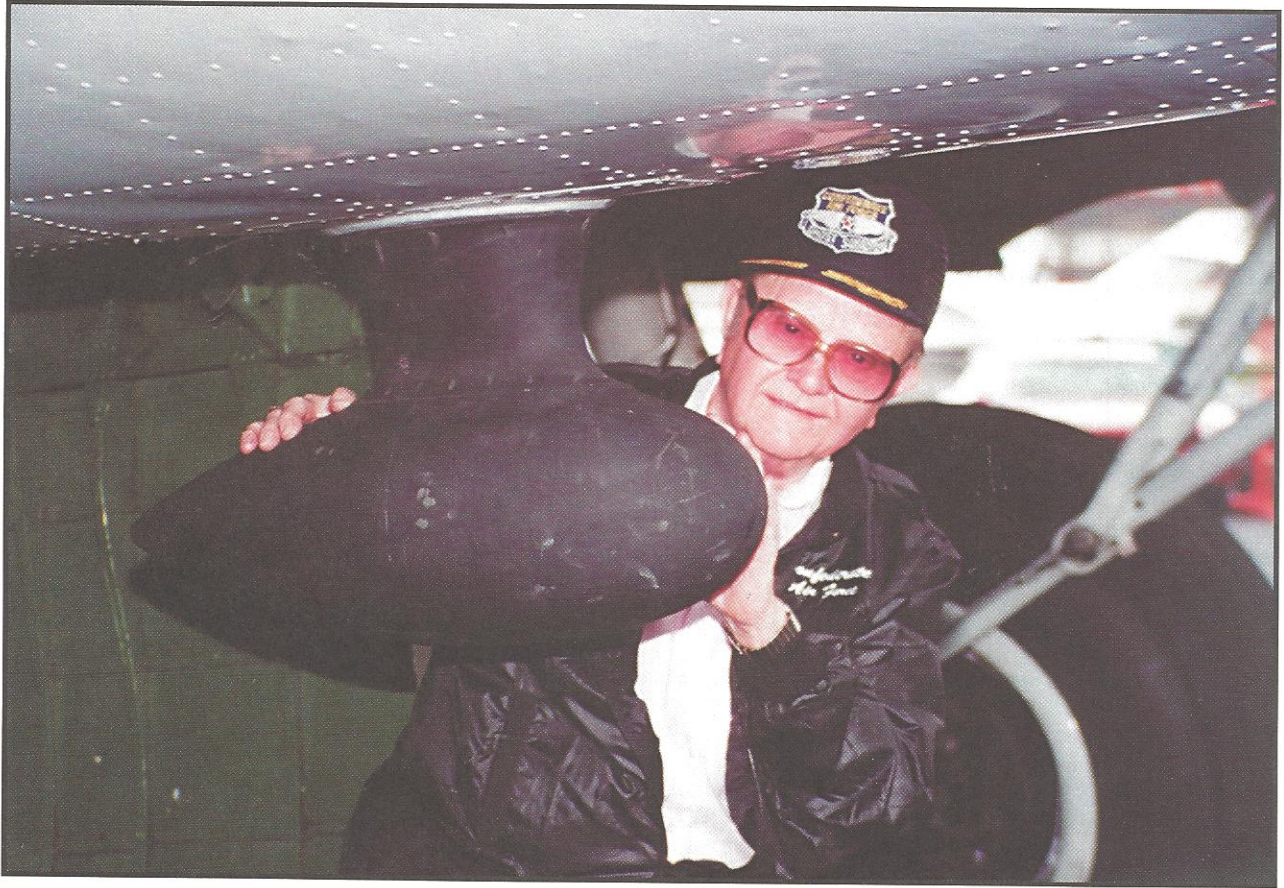
While awaiting my draft call my life was suddenly interrupted in October, 1942 when I was drafted into the CTC and made supervisor of a Signal Corps department at an army air base where I served for 14 months maintaining aircraft radio and electronics equipment. I had a secretary, eight repairmen and a stock clerk and had an average of 250 BT-13 airplanes (shown above) plus a few other types.

Since we were at war, security was strict and cameras were not allowed on the base. The only picture that we have of myself in my Signal Corps uniform was taken at home and is shown at the right.

With much difficulty I resigned this service and immediately joined the U. S. Navy on February 4, 1944 and served for two years, receiving an honorable discharge on February 11, 1946.



- STEPPING BACK IN TIME - WORLD WAR II - SIGNAL CORPS DAYS

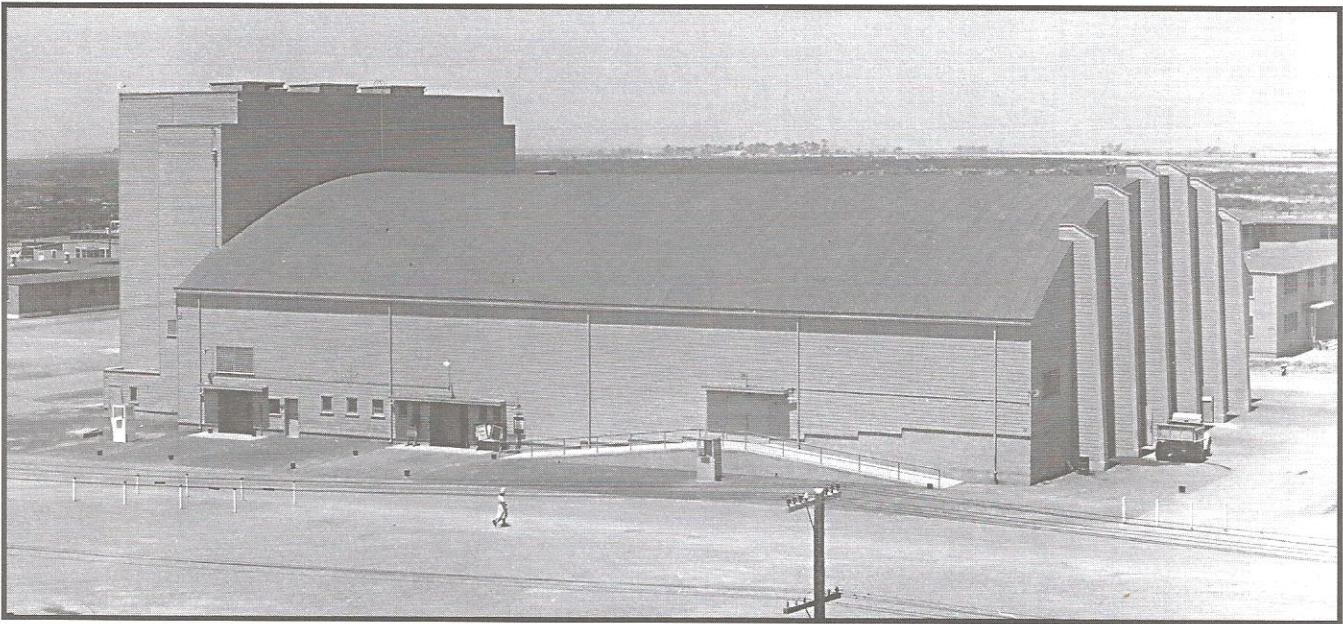


My first tour of duty in the Signal Corps was at Tinker Field near Oklahoma City. I almost got killed while there. Shown above is me inspecting an LP-21-A ADF loop under the belly of a B-17 bomber. I had just removed the loop and was barely out from under the airplane when it came crashing to the hanger floor. A female civilian worker was in the cockpit and released the landing gear. Just seconds before I was lying on my back under the heavy bomber.



Thousands of these B-17 four-engine bombers played an important roll both in the European and Pacific theaters of war.

- STEPPING BACK IN TIME -
Feb. 4, 1944 - Feb. 11, 1946 - United States Navy



Here's the huge auditorium at Camp Elliot, California where my office, art and silk-screen room, shop and dark room were located. Note the large fly-loft.

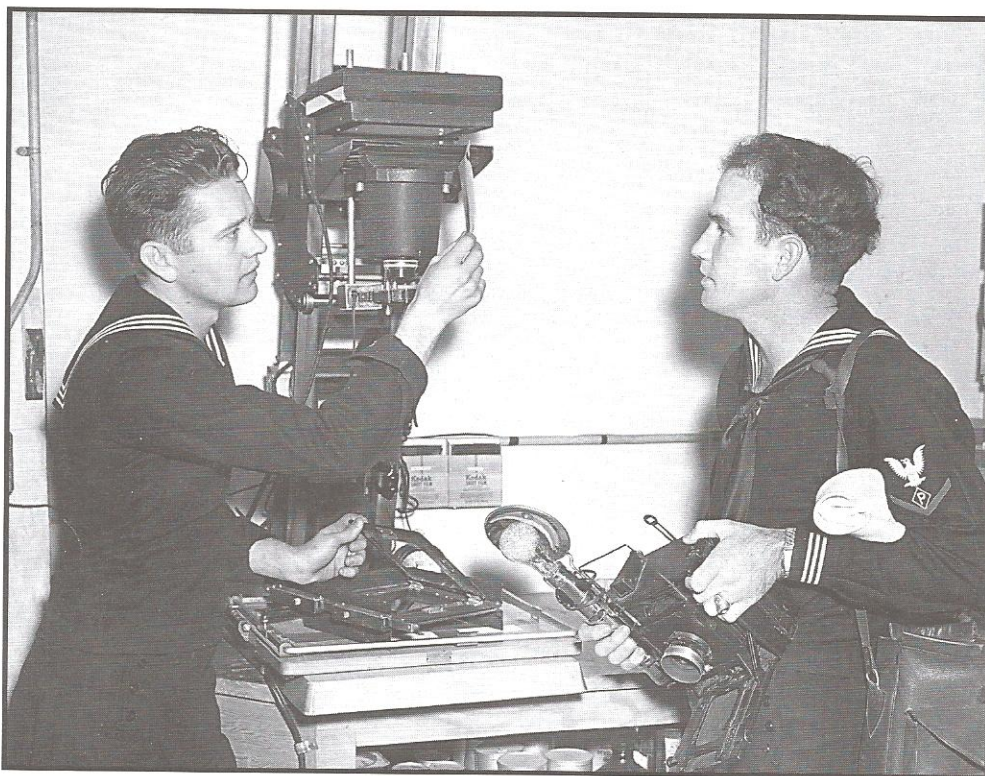


Sailors enjoy one of the many stage performances we offered. At the time it was said to be the largest single-deck auditorium in the world with 3,012 seats.

WORLD WAR II - NAVY DAYS



Here I am at my desk just outside the dark room.



Here I am at my Omega D-2 enlarger showing a negative to friend and co-worker, Ray Cresson.

WORLD WAR II - NAVY DAYS



This is a photo that I took from a lighting booth in the top of our auditorium of Dr. Otto Klemperer and his 100-piece symphony orchestra when he performed on our stage in the mid-40's. Dr. Klemperer was a very famous conductor having headed up several famous orchestras both in America and abroad. We were honored to have him perform in our auditorium at Camp Elliot. More information on Dr. Klemperer may be found in any encyclopedia.



We had frequent performances on our stage, many by famous Hollywood personalities. For this show, "The Shooting of Dan McGrew" I put together a cast of actor wannabes from our navy personnel and acted with them in the play. Incidentally, I designed and painted the entire set.

WORLD WAR II - NAVY DAYS



Many movie stars of the World War II era performed on our stage. Shown above are the hilarious Three Stooges, Larry, Curly and Moe, who were on our stage several times. One time I was in their dressing room admiring one of Moe's silk shirts. I told him that I had never owned a silk shirt and he handed me one. I was a skinny 130 pounds and the shirt would wrap around me twice, but off base I wore it proudly!

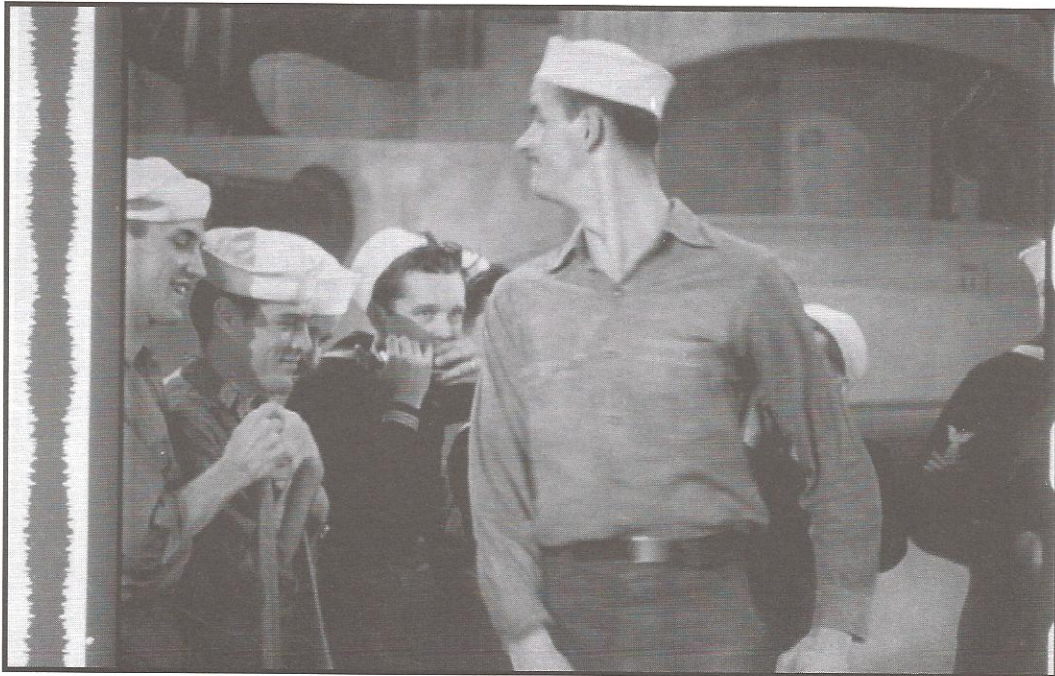


Above are the Marx Brothers with Groucho and Harpo Clowning with Lt. Commander J. G. Ferguson.

WORLD WAR II - NAVY DAYS



In the middle of World War II a representative of Warner Brothers contacted me about furnishing a harmonica trio for a series of featurettes they were about to produce. I put the trio together and when the films came to our base theater I clipped some frames out of the films and took them to my darkroom where I made enlargements from the 35mm originals. That is me on the left, Watson Davis in the center and Shorty Hogan on the right.



We made a total of five films in Balboa Park in San Diego and got paid the sum of \$25 per day. That was a lot of money back then! The guy up front was a Hollywood performer called "Rubber Legs" and you can see me playing harmonica in the background. Note the sound track on the left of the pictures.



On VJ Day I had a bunch of sailors throw their hats in the air and took this picture which made the front pages.

JAPS SURRENDER-WAR ENDS

Most Destructive War In History Ended Tuesday

WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY DECLARED
LEGAL HOLIDAYS; V-J DAY TO BE PRO-
CLAIMED WHEN TERMS ARE SIGNED.

The above front page is typical of newspaper headlines throughout the world. Our nation rejoiced as we witnessed the end of the most destructive war in history. It caused massive destruction and loss of life and affected the lives of everyone in the world.

A LITTLE KNOWN PIECE OF GEOGRAPHY, ITS CABLE SYSTEMS AND HURRICANES

By James Y. "Jimmy" Davidson
Written in October, 1998

In the 50 year history of cable television there are myriad interesting stories out there, especially in the beginning. I have a number of stories that I can tell but I would also like to hear the stories that other cable pioneers such as Bob Tarlton, Marty Malarky, George Bright, Eli Kramer, Bill Daniels, Al Malin, George Barco, Frank Thompson and many other pioneers could tell. Some are still with us but, unfortunately, many early pioneers have gone on to that great cable system in Heaven.

Here is one of my cable stories that I hope you will find interesting. It concerns a piece of U. S. Geography that is generally unknown or overlooked. Over the years I have asked many people where they think the Mississippi River empties into the Gulf of Mexico and in many instances they think it is at New Orleans. Not so at all! Actually, it is at a place called "Head of the Passes" about 100 miles south of New Orleans. I refer to Plaquemine Parish in Louisiana which is a low-lying swampy peninsula that extends in a south easterly direction below New Orleans.

The times that I was there were many years ago and this narrow strip of muddy land had four prominent parallel arteries, the Mississippi River, a levee, a railroad and State Highway #23. In a recent conversation with Virgil Jackson I learned that most of the railroad no longer exists due to hurricane damage.

This peninsula is sparsely populated but there is a string of small villages for its entire length. Located near the southern end are Buras and Venice which are the most prominent villages and the highway stops at Venice. South of there on the other side of the river is a small village called "Pilottown" which is only reached by boat from Venice. It is here that Mississippi River pilots board ships, mandated by law, to navigate them upstream. The Mississippi River is deep enough for large ships all the way from here to New Orleans and even upstream another 80 miles to Baton Rouge, the state capital. During our many cruises on the mighty river we have seen lots of large freighters as we passed Baton Rouge.

There are four major industries that support Plaquemines Parish: Fishing, offshore oil wells, oil refineries and oranges. Did I say oranges? Absolutely! Most people think that all U. S. citrus fruit is grown in Florida, California and extreme south Texas. However, for years this peninsula has produced a variety of orange unlike any other and there is a packing plant that ships these oranges in season. It is a very sweet Valencia which is unlike Florida's sweet Valencias in that it is as large as a grapefruit and the natives claim that it is even sweeter. This peninsula is very vulnerable to storms and hurricanes and every time a hurricane visits the area the orange trees suffer various amounts of damage. After a hurricane it takes about three years for the trees to begin producing again.

Hurricanes also destroy or severely damage homes and facilities, but these south Louisiana people are tough and always bounce back.

For many years a politician named Judge Perez controlled Plaquemines Parish like a dictator. I have heard that he was a lovable dictator and that everyone on the peninsula was grateful for all the great things he did for them.

Cable Pioneers Virgil Jackson and his brother, the late H. E. Jackson, built their first cable system in Vidalia, Louisiana in 1956 and I was very involved with the supplying of equipment and materials for this pioneer cable system.

Later, in 1965, the Jackson brothers built cable systems in Buras and Venice, locating their tower in between at Boothville. Again, I was very instrumental in helping them get started here. They had just energized their systems there when, on September 9, 1965, Hurricane Betsy came along and devastated the area, destroying their systems. Only the tower was left standing. Again, I flew to New Orleans, rented a car and helped them assess the damage. We sent crews and equipment there to rebuild the system and, just four months later, on January 8, 1966 the systems were turned on and ready for subscribers.

Talk about hard luck, on August 18, 1969 Hurricane Camille, the worst to strike this continent in recorded history, destroyed the Jackson brother's Buras and Venice cable systems again. Camille struck the Gulf Coast with winds in excess of 200 miles per hour and a tide surge of over 30 feet. The tower was the only part of the systems to survive but the force of 200 mile per hour winds and salt water stripped the paint off of it. That this tower withstood these hurricanes is a tribute to J. E. Wolfe of Cleveland, Mississippi who built the tower.

Again, DAVCO Electronics came to the rescue and rebuilt the Jackson brothers systems. One would think they would have given up by now, but their determination is a tribute to Virgil and H. E. Jackson.

Incidentally, I wrote and published two illustrated books on Hurricane Camille and all 35,000 copies were a popular sellout.

The Jackson Brothers sold these systems in 1980 but Virgil still has real estate holdings in the area as well as a shrimp boat.

Guess what? As I write this another hurricane named Georges just struck the region. While not as powerful as the others, it did cause considerable damage to the Buras and Venice systems. Georges left the African west coast and made a bee line across the Atlantic Ocean for the United States, causing considerable damage and loss of life on Caribbean islands which were in its path. It did considerable damage as it passed through the Florida Keys, and even more damage from winds and flooding on the Mississippi, Alabama and Florida Panhandle.

Well, so much for Plaquemine Parish for now. I Hope that it will be a very long time before another hurricane visits the area.

This map illustrates the coastal region of Louisiana, highlighting the Gulf Coast area. Key locations and features include:

- Cities and Towns:** New Orleans, Slidell, Mandeville, Santa Rosa, Pearl River, Bay St Louis, Pass Christian, Ship Island, Dog Keys, Pass, Gulf Island Nat'l Seashore, Breton Nat'l Wildlife Refuge, Morgan Harbor, Elmer Bay, Black Bay, California Bay, Grand Bay, Port Sulphur, Buras, Venice, Pilotown, and Blind Bay.
- Water Bodies:** Lake Borgne, Breton Sound, and the Gulf of Mexico.
- Highways:** I-10, I-90, I-59, I-49, and US-90.
- Geographical Features:** The Mississippi River, the Gulf Islands National Seashore, and the Breton National Wildlife Refuge.
- Other Labels:** "PLAQUEMINES PARISH" is indicated with a large arrow pointing to the coastal area. Other labels include "GULF PORT", "MISS", and "GULF OF MEXICO".

JACKSON CABLE T.V., INC.

Excerpts from a nice letter to me
from cable pioneer Virgil Jackson

Post Office Box 8196
Clinton, Louisiana 70722
Phone (504) 683-9297

2 April 1992

The following week my brother and I had a meeting with Jim Davidson, the owner and founder of DAVCO ELECTRONICS CORPORATION located in Batesville, Arkansas, to discuss ways and means of building a cable system with very little capital. This meeting turned out to be not only a solution to our problem of obtaining the necessary equipment and material for the headend with a very small down payment and the remaining amount to be paid as the system came on line but, it also turned out to be one of the most rewarding friendships of my life.

We leased land just outside of the town of Vidalia in an area that was in a swamp and had to build the house for the headend equipment on telephone poles in order to stay dry when water backed up from the Mississippi River overflowing its banks which occurred about every three to five years. We went ahead and built the headend, but did not have money to purchase a tower of at least 300 feet required to get a signal of sufficient strength to obtain the necessary picture quality we needed. Again Jim Davidson, helped to provide the solution by putting us in touch with Jay Wolfe, another friend I will never forget. Jay built us the tower with nothing down and only our word that we would pay once we started to obtain customers. At this point we had a complete headend setup with extremely good pictures but no distribution system and still with insufficient funds to continue building. At this point, I invited a wealthy local business man and a very good friend out to the headend to show him what type pictures could be obtained with the proper equipment. He was very much impressed stating that even in Memphis near the transmitter the pictures were not any better and he gave us \$7500 before he left the building to start constructing the trunk lines into town.

This first system was very successful, allowing us to repay the people which gave us extended loans and believed that the venture was sound and that my brother and I were good for the money with just a handshake. It also provided the nestegg that allowed us to constructed eight other cable systems since this first one. Our system in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana was destroyed twice by hurricanes and rebuilt. This was covered by your book "Camile Was No Lady".

I am no longer active in Cable. We have now sold all but one cable system that serves Clinton, Jackson, and East Feliciana Parish in Louisiana and is now managed by James G. Jackson, my youngest son.

It has been a pleasure being part of the beginning of cable television industry and being able to associate with men that had a clear vision for the future and of such great integrity as is exemplified in you - Jim Davidson - a true friend.

Virgil and H. E. Jackson started their
Cable System in Vidalia, LA in 1956

Sincerely yours,
Virgil
Virgil Frank Jackson

BURAS VIDEO vs. HURRICANE BETSY

*Photos courtesy Jim Davidson,
Davco Electronics*

On September 9, 1965, Buras Video Inc. had just energized part of its newly-built plant. About 100 subscribers were receiving service. On September 9, 1965, Hurricane Betsy hit Buras, Louisiana — hard.

The story of Buras Video reflects the drama of that entire community since the hurricane hit: appalling loss, followed by energetic and optimistic reconstruction.

The Buras system is owned by Virgil and H. E. Jackson. As originally built, it was an all-band plant using Entron equipment and a Davco "functional design" head-end. Betsy took down 75% of the aluminum-sheath cable, submerged all 40 LHR-45 trunkline amplifiers, and laid waste to the head-end facilities.

On January 8 of this year, just four months later, the reconstructed system was energized — with head-end equipment, new Weather-Scan, and 32 of the original amplifiers!

The Buras community and Buras Video are unique in many ways. System builder (and rebuilder) Jim Davidson describes Buras like this:

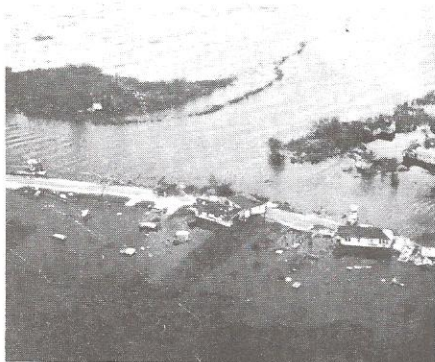
"It is unlike any other place I know of. Most people think the mouth of the Mississippi is at New Orleans, but this is certainly not true—accounting for the unusual geography that made CATV feasible in the Buras area. The mighty river extends in a southeasterly direction for about 100 miles from New Orleans, through swamplands that form a peninsula into the Gulf of Mexico.

"Parallel and very close to the river are a levee, a railroad, and a highway. There are very few side roads or streets, and those that exist are short. In other words, one must envision this as being a long thin town stretched out for miles and miles along State Highway 23.

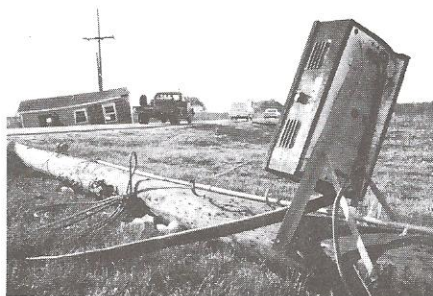
"The resulting CATV system consists of about 30 miles of straight trunk line. Most of the feeder line parallels the trunk; however, there are a few lateral feeders.

"Dry land is at a premium there, and the long strip adjacent to the levee serves as the artery of all traffic and communications—including television signals via CATV."

As the photos taken by Jim Davidson clearly illustrate, rebuilding of the



Homes of the Buras community piled on the main highway by Hurricane Betsy.



No communications pole lines remained intact—all CATV amplifiers were submerged.



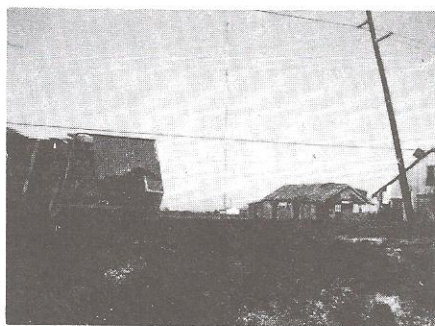
Enough weather for a lifetime—in just a few hours!



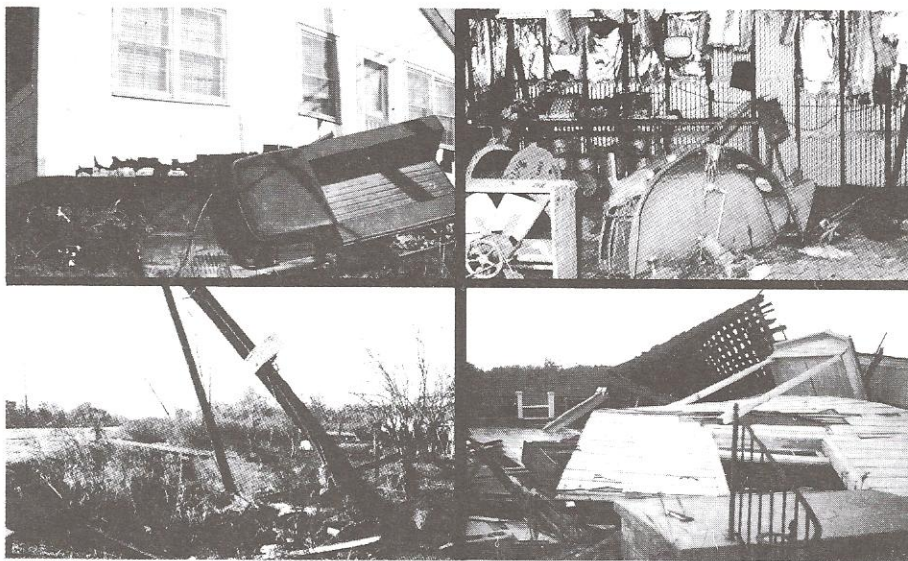
The Buras Video office after Betsy. Note trunkline on the ground in foreground.



One of the few undamaged pole locations, with buildings washed up around it. Dan's Barber Shop was in operation when photo was taken!



The Fort Worth Tower installation stood despite 170 mile winds and a tremendous tidal wave which wiped out chain-link fence at its base. Salt water and sand in Betsy's high winds blasted all paint off the tower!



Hurricane Betsy left little for anyone to work with.

Buras cable service meant overcoming many physical obstacles, as well as the disappointment of seeing the new plant destroyed before it was fully energized.

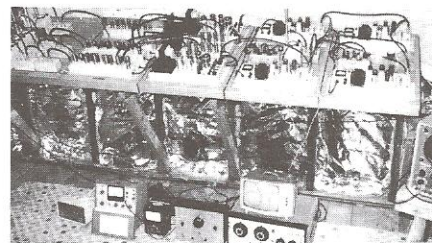
In addition to the damage mentioned above and shown in the photos, the Davco crews (based in Batesville, Arkansas) were unable to find public

little the storm left of the system required painstaking repair and checking. Only the head-end equipment, incidentally, was insured against the loss.

Though it will still be some time before all facets of life are back to normal in the Buras area, the residents



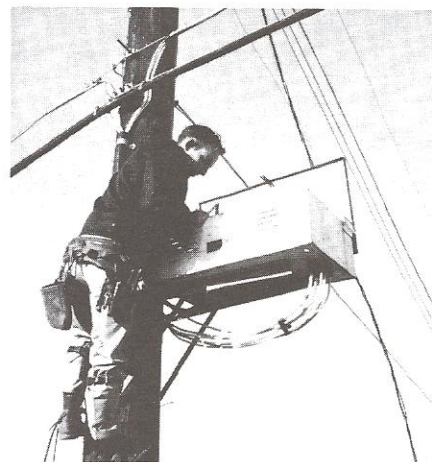
75% of the cable was beyond salvage—only part is shown.



New Davco "functional design" head-end equipment was installed.



Virgil (left) and H. E. Jackson announced opening of their rebuilt system via Weather-Scan audio.



Davco field engineer Tommy Kinion applies finishing touches to rebuilt and re-installed Entron trunk amplifier.

accommodations even seven weeks after the storm when they began the rebuilding operation. Damage to utility lines and other property, and an unbelievable amount of debris in the area, hampered many phases of salvage and installation work. Even what

do have their new cable service. Service in the public's interest is the heart of CATV. Only a desire to render such service could have provided sufficient motivation for the Jackson brothers to pick up the pieces and start all over in Buras. □

JIMMY DAVIDSON HOSTS THE NINTH ANNUAL PIONEER'S DINNER AT NEW ORLEANS - APRIL 14, 1975

I had the honor of hosting the Ninth Annual Pioneer's Dinner in New Orleans on April 14th, 1975. I made all arrangements with Royal Sonesta Hotel in the center of the French Quarter.

Since New Orleans is one of our most favorite cities, I was determined to make it the best Pioneer's event ever. Unfortunately, an unexpected illness prevented Janet from attending.

In addition to two bands, a comedy act and an extensive New Orleans menu, I brought six cases of our award winning Wiederkehr's Arkansas wine in my airplane. I also furnished red, white and blue straw party hats and a souvenir menu with an embossed red velvet cover for everyone. I even hired two young Southern Belles to be hostesses. They mingled through the crowd making certain all Pioneers were happy. Please forgive all the bragging but I was determined to make this the happiest fun-filled Pioneer's dinner ever!

Rather than interrupt my own fun at the dinner by taking pictures myself, I hired a local photographer. Unfortunately, his pictures were not great and the prints he supplied to me were very small, 3.5" x 5". However, some day when time permits I plan to enlarge these photos and add other material to produce a booklet of this event. The booklet will have lots of pictures of the Pioneers but, unfortunately, many of those in the pictures have become deceased since the event.

The menu was awesome and there were souvenirs for all. Would you believe that I put this all together for only \$40 per person? Of course that was 23 years ago.



One of the two bands I hired was a New Orleans Marching Band. Shown here we are leaving the hotel to march single file around the French Quarter to tunes such as "The Saints Go Marching In" and other typical marching tunes.

**JIMMY DAVIDSON HOSTS THE NINTH ANNUAL PIONEER'S
DINNER AT NEW ORLEANS - APRIL 14, 1975**



JIMMY GREETES ANOTHER CABLE PIONEER, BOB AND FLORENCE TARLTON



**Left to right: Yolando Barco, Walter Kaitz, Clive Runnels, and George Barco.
As this is written, Walter & George are deceased.**

**JIMMY DAVIDSON HOSTS THE NINTH ANNUAL PIONEER'S
DINNER AT NEW ORLEANS - APRIL 14, 1975**



JIMMY AND POLLY DUNN ENJOY A DANCE!

As this is written, the gracious and loveable Polly Dunn is deceased.

**JIMMY DAVIDSON HOSTS THE NINTH ANNUAL PIONEER'S
DINNER AT NEW ORLEANS - APRIL 14, 1975**



**JIMMY JOINS BILLY FANE FOR SOME COMEDY ROUTINES
FRANK THOMPSON CALLS US "FRICK & FRACK"**



Shown in the center is Dwayne Millikin, Manager of the Batesville Cable System that we sold to TCA along with a number of other systems in 1982. The occasion was a town meeting held at the Batesville city hall. It was in the fall of 1993 and the purpose of the meeting was to determine how the city and county could build a new jail. Batesville Cable TV covered the meeting live on channel 6 for cable subscribers. Others in the picture are Don Provence on Dwayne's left and Keith Provence on his right. Dwayne tells me that both men have worked for him for 18 years.

The August 5, 1998 issue of the Batesville Daily Guard reported that the Quorum Court had voted to hire four new officers to help staff the new 90 bed jail facility.

Dwayne is very active in civic affairs and has also served on the Southside school board for 15 years. At the suggestion of my son, J.E. "Jamie" Davidson, I hired Dwayne in 1964 and he has now been in cable for 34 years. Dwayne tells me that he loves cable and can't wait to get to work every morning. I am proud that I built the first cable system in Arkansas and that it is still thriving under the new ownership.

Time and space does not allow me to elaborate on all our local employees, but several like J.D. Pierce, Gene Barnett and Harold Wilson have continued in cable on their own and are doing quite well. J.D. came to work for me in August, 1958 so he has been in cable for 40 years. Gene and Harold came on board in the same year as Dwayne, 1964.

I hired Phyllis Barber at age 17 in May, 1963. She was fresh out of high school and graduated at the top of her class. She was an absolute whiz at shorthand and typing and worked for us for many years. Phyllis is currently working in the superintendent's office of the Newark, Arkansas School District.



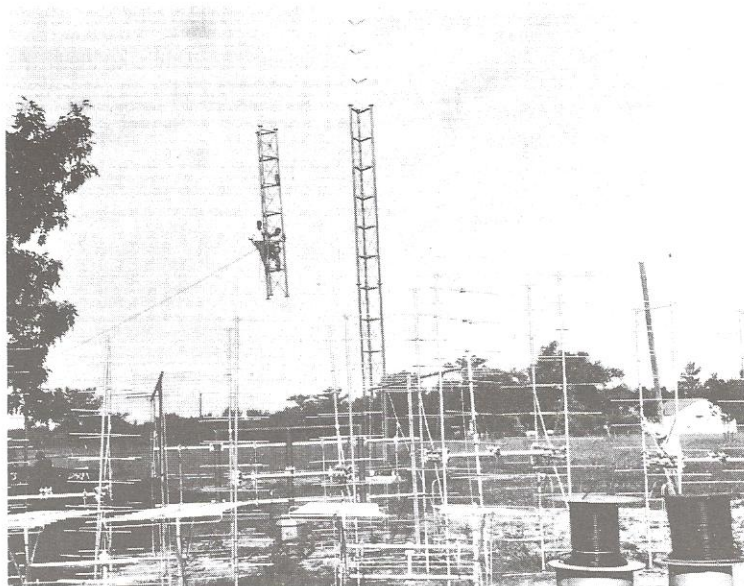
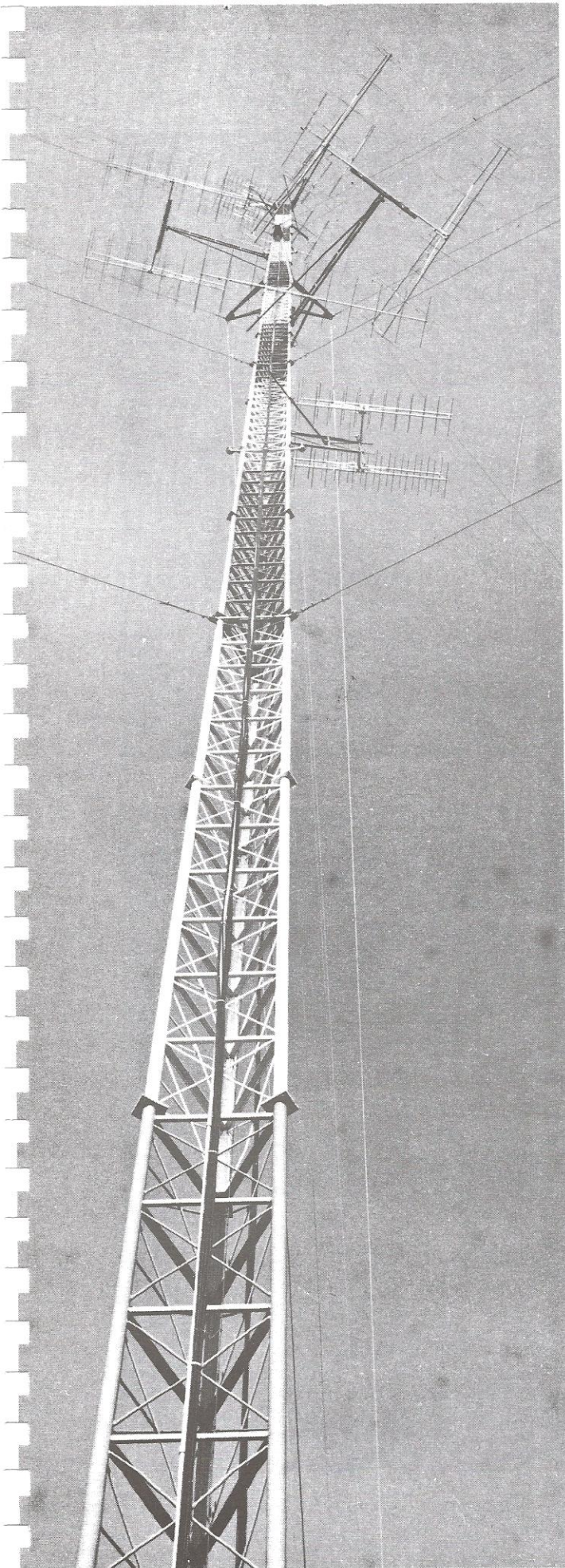
Above, I had just landed at McGhee, Arkansas and was met by system manager, Major Blissitt. It was probably in the mid-70's.

I hired Delores Wallace in 1957 and she was with us for 24 years. This grand lady was loved by all who knew her and she passed away on February 5, 1998 at age 94.

Paul Eddington came to work with us in 1970 and is still manager of TCA Newport, Arkansas cable system. As with all the others, Paul has always been a very loyal employee and tells me that he really has always enjoyed cable television. He thanked me for giving him the opportunity and said that he enjoyed working for me and subsequently for TCA.

Major Blissitt came with us in 1968 to manage my systems at McGhee, Lake Village, Dumas and Dermott in southeast Arkansas. Major echoes Paul Eddington's comments and has also been a valued employee for both me and subsequently TCA.

TCA was founded by the late Bob Rogers in Tyler, Texas. TCA purchased our systems in three segments over a period of several years. It is now a large MSO with cable systems in several states. TCA is now headed by President and CEO Fred Nichols who has been with the company since its inception. It is a well run organization that maintains employee loyalty the same as I did before them.



NEWPORT CABLE TV

Above is a member of the tower construction crew on his way to the top of the the 500 foot tower with the last section.

Note all the massive antenna arrays that will be hoisted to the top and installed. There were a total of 15 TV, FM and our own background music channels.

We also installed a trunk line to feed our Tuckerman system which is 10 miles to the north.

The Newport system (now owned by TCA) was constructed in 1964 and is still managed by Paul Eddington who came to work for us in 1970.

The utilities in Newport were Arkansas Power & light Company and Southwestern Bell Telephone Company. Despite our good relations with these utilities at other locations over the years, they were giving us a hard time on the joint use pole attachments. They were asking for ridiculously high pole rentals.

So, I simply ordered enough poles for the entire city and we now had our own pole system. Ironically, both utilities later asked us for permission to attach to some of our poles, so the shoe was on the other foot!

Long Time Employees of DAVCO ELECTRONICS
Photos made in fall of 1963



Delores Wallace



Phyllis Barber



At left is the “old man” who started it all J.Y. (Jimmy) Davidson. Next are my grandsons, James Robert Cord Davidson and Christopher Yates Davidson. On the right is my son, James Ervin (Jamie) Davidson.

Jamie was only four years old when I connected my first subscriber. Our cable business was well under way and enjoying expansion when grandsons Cord and Chris were born.



When I first started stringing cable I had only one employee and did a lot of pole climbing myself. Years later when we had many employees and were constructing the cable system for Bob Neathery and Paul Thompson in West Plains, Missouri I flew my airplane up there with a load of construction supplies. I believe it was about 1956.

We had two-way radios at our base stations, in our trucks and in my airplane. Approaching West Plains I radioed my foreman and he met me at the airport from where we drove to the construction site with the materials.

Standing on the ground I noticed a new lineman on the pole above. He looked down and said, "You must be Mr. Davidson." I was wearing a suit and tie and he said, "I'll bet you never climbed a pole." I said nothing in reply and motioned him to come down, whereupon I told him to remove his climbers and belt. I put them on and climbed the pole for him. From that time on he showed me more respect.



These are my two grandsons (Jamie's boys) at the new tower site where Jamie moved it from Ruddle Hill to a hill on his farm northwest of Batesville. Chris is on the tower and Cord is looking on. Don't know the date but the boys appear to be about 7 and 9 years old.



Jimmy & Janet Davidson with President Ronald Reagan
in his Hollywood, California office, February 23, 1995



*To Jimmy and Janet ~ With
Best Wishes! Ronald Reagan*



Here are Janet and I with Roy Rogers who is still going strong at age 80. Below is Roy Jr. with us. His nickname is "Dusty." The date was March 25, 1992 and this is one of a couple of visits we had with Roy and Dusty. The King of the Cowboys passed away on July 6, 1998 at age 86. (These photos are reductions from the original 8" x 10".)





Janet and I wore our "10-gallon Stetsons" to the February, 1976 Pioneer's dinner in Dallas, Texas. We wanted to fit in with the Texans! We left the Pioneer's Dinner and flew our airplane back to Little Rock after midnight and the weather was lousy but we made it fine.

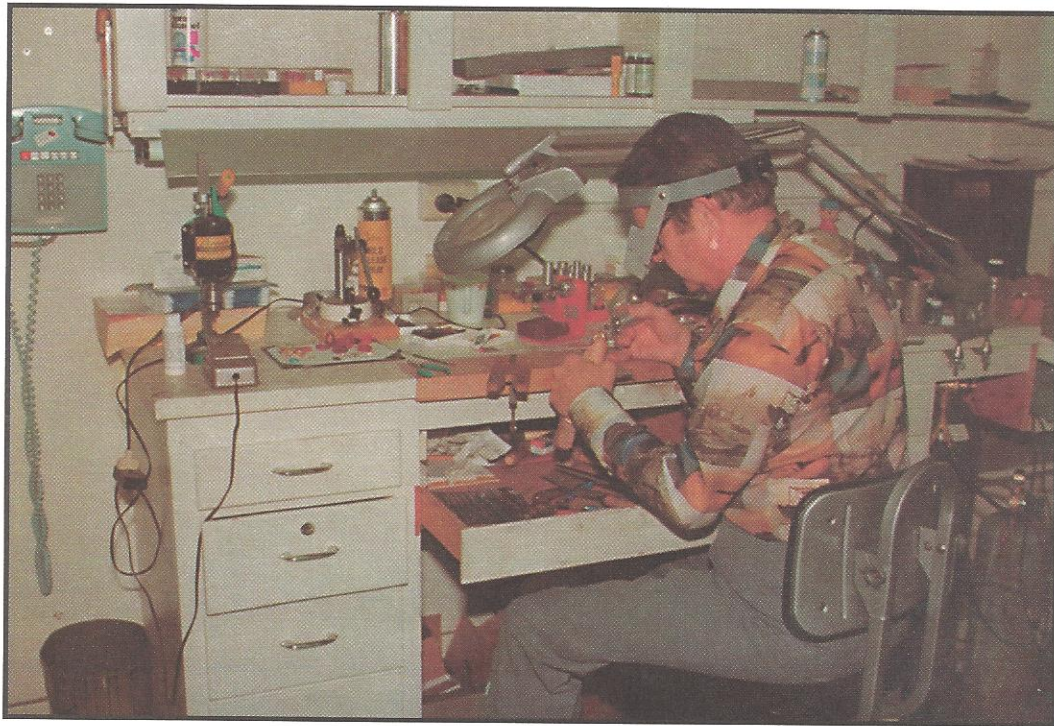


In the photo above we were secured to a flat car on a train that took us across Mexico. What an adventure! We went through the Sierra Madre' Mountains where the terrain is so rugged that there are no roads or airports. We saw the Copper Canyon which is several times larger than the Grand Canyon and we visited with a Tarahumara Indian Family that still lived in a cave. After this we crossed the Sea of Cortez on a large ferry ship and then drove the full 1000 mile length of the Baja Peninsula.

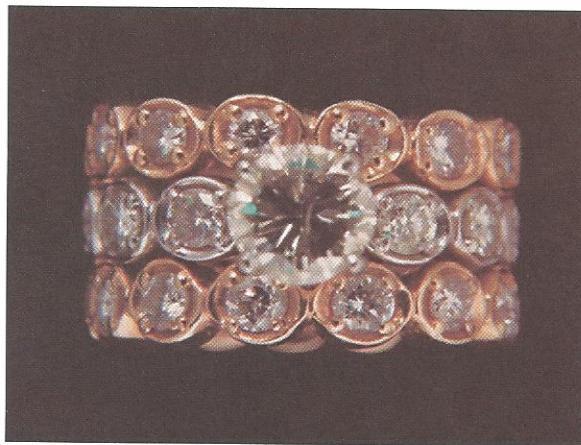
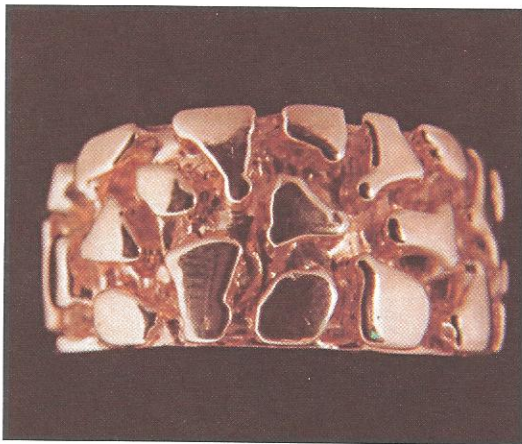


This is our last yacht, the ocean-going "Janet Marie II" that we designed and built. She was very large and extremely well equipped. She held 3,000 gallons of diesel fuel! She had three diesel engines, three diesel generators and two Jacuzzis. We had a lot of fun traveling on this vessel!

What did we name our business? **DAVCO WHOLESALE JEWELRY**, of course!

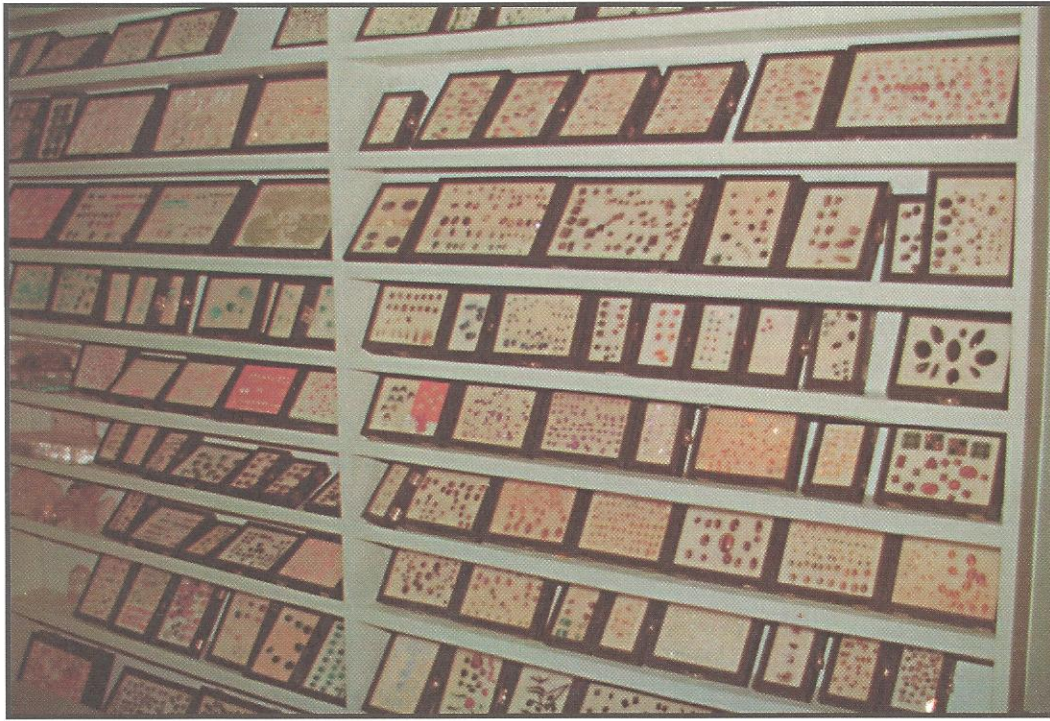


Janet and I became bored with travelling all the time and decided to do something else for a while. I had been designing and manufacturing custom jewelry at our home in west Little Rock since the late 60's and we decided to move our jewelry operation to a downtown office building where we operated from 1975 to 1980. Shown above is me working at my jeweler's bench.



I custom designed and made our wedding rings. At left is Janet's combination wedding/engagement ring. It is made with three rows of diamonds all the way around the ring. These are sometimes called eternity rings. Janet's ring has 38 diamonds in the three bands and one 1 carat diamond for a total weight of about 5 carats.

My wedding ring is shown at right and I made it with 18 karat gold using the lost-wax process.



We intended to have a very small operation but it rapidly grew to the point where we had the largest and most varied inventory of jewelry, gemstones and jeweler's supplies in the area. We didn't realize it at first, but Janet and I were working very long hard hours, even though we had hired additional help. 12 to 16 hours a day finally got to us and we sold the business in 1980 to Harold Murchison who is doing a successful and thriving business. We are proud of the effort and skill Harold has put into the business.



We stocked thousands of gemstones both precious and semi-precious including diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires, etc.



Janet and I are all dressed up for the formal night on one of the 22 cruises that we have made over the years. The picture shows our custom wedding rings that I made as well as a very unique custom necklace that I made for Janet.



-JIMMY'S DAVIDSON'S BAND-
In the post World War II Years

This was written in September, 1998

What does this have to do with cable television? Well, it was one of the ways that I earned a living while building my first small system in Tuckerman, Arkansas. And, it's a bit of history. Here is a 1947 photo of myself and my band. These musicians were among those who performed on my radio show and they were the cream of the crop, all very skilled. Ironically, two of the members recently committed suicide. From left to right is Bob Armstrong on his accordion. Bob was also a fine piano player and he restored and tuned pianos. We don't know what happened to Bob, but the last we heard he was playing in Hollywood. The name of the standing guitar player is Paul Whaley who is currently playing and singing in Vallejo, California. Of course, that's me on the drums. I painted the head of my bass drum to look like a swing band in tuxedos. Next is Charlie Martin, an excellent trumpet man who has played with many of the well known big bands, as well as Hollywood and Las Vegas. The last time I saw Charlie was in New Orleans. Janet and I were walking on Bourbon Street one night and I heard Charlie's unmistakable trumpet. We followed the sound and found him to be the featured musician in a five-piece group at the Maisson Bourbon. They played everything, but featured Dixieland jazz. Charlie recognized me as we walked through the door, took a break and joined us at our table. We reminisced about old times and Charlie autographed one of his albums and presented it to us. This was in 1974 and we haven't seen him since. A few years ago we heard that he had taken his life but don't have any details. Next is Kern Kennedy playing piano. I gave Kern his first job playing as a professional. Kern became a very fine piano player and has played with some of the well known names, including Elvis Presley, The Pacers and the Union Pacific Band and has recorded for Sun Records. Elvis Presley once offered Kern a job as piano player and he turned him down. Kern is now retired from Union Pacific Railroad and he and his wife, Leah, live near us and we visit often. He is still playing piano and is in great demand. Next is Dennis Ball on guitar, a fine musician and composer. Last we heard, he was playing solo engagements, but we recently learned that he had an incurable disease and had taken his life. I still have my Slingerland drum set but have not played professionally in many years. Kern is not the only one to turn Elvis down. Elvis once offered to play with my band for \$150 a week and I turned him down. Obviously this was before he made the big time!



Otus the Head Cat

Forget the Felsenthal: Folks find real piranha elsewhere

Jimmy Davidson was most emphatic: The stuffed piranha did not — repeat, did not — come from the murky waters of Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge in south Arkansas.

The semiretired Little Rock businessman now living in Cabot chuckled when asked if he was certain, since there had been widespread but unsubstantiated reports that the feared, carnivorous, flesh-devouring creatures were prowling the mercury-infested Ouachita River along with its associated oxbow lakes, backwaters and borrow ditches.

Davidson insisted that he and his charming wife, Janet, knew better, indeed. The couple, he said, had just returned from a thrilling action-packed cruise 1,000 miles up the Amazon to where the fish were *really* found.

The veteran traveler said they had bought several of the mounted fish from natives while on a side trip from the Greek liner *Stella Solaris*. To be precise, Davidson said the critters were bought in the village of Pacoval, a few miles from the mouth of the Rio Curua Una, which lies about 400 miles up the Amazon.

Folks there were also spotted with pet sloths, he said. He didn't bring one of those back.

The Davidsons made the river adventure in the company of famed author and South American scholar Loren McIntyre. McIntyre, Davidson said, has been published in lots of prestigious publications, including *National Geographic*, and serves as the magazine's principal consultant on South America.

McIntyre, Davidson noted, knows where to find piranha and it's not in Felsenthal.

Regular readers will recall the near panic caused when it was reported in this space Feb. 3 that local sportsmen had claimed to have seen a full grown deer devoured down to bones while trying to swim across part of Lake Jack Lee near Crossett.

Arkansas state ichthyologist Dr. Brian Agnatha cast substantial doubts on the reports based, in part, on his vast knowledge of the species. Other experts

joined Agnatha in dismissing the hunters' account.

However, when *The Eagle Democrat* of Warren picked up the column and reprinted it on its front page on Feb. 14, local bait shops were inundated with fishermen wanting to land themselves a trophy piranha.

Dozens of curious onlookers lined the banks of the Ouachita at Moro Bay State Park and "chummed" the waters with chunks of discarded scraps taken from the Dumpster behind Mel's Seafood Restaurant in El Dorado.

And although no piranha appeared, U.S. Fish and Wildlife officials at Felsenthal geared up into serious damage-control mode, going on local radio to deny the reports. Rep. Jay Dickey, R-Ark., instructed his office to look into the mat-

the bloody demise of a 12-point trophy buck, the boys had actually watched a brief, but frenzied, encounter between a rather large and belligerent nutria and a mercury-crazed pickerel.

Turns out the water rat also got the better of the match.

Davidson found it ironic that all this controversy was happening back home while he and his wife were with the real thing in Brazil. When the liner got to Curua Una, the couple took off with McIntyre on a side trip aboard the tiny native vessel, the *Irmaos Souza*, which means "Irma's Souvenirs" or some such in Portuguese.

The Davidsons even went fishing for piranha using a hand line baited with "a big chunk of raw meat." Davidson said the feisty little fish were landed "about as fast as we could throw the hook in the water."

He also said it was a "catch and release" situation but in the interest of keeping all their fingers they let the natives remove the hooks.

To remember their adventure they bought several stuffed piranhas and in honor of all the fuss back home Davidson presented one of them to Owner last week. Owner named it Pete and put it in a place of honor on a shelf in the den next to the shark in a bottle that Master Ben bought a couple of weeks ago on a father/son trip to Biloxi, Miss.

Davidson said the Amazon natives sell the mounted fish for about \$3 apiece and I think there's an opportunity here for some visionary south Arkansas entrepreneur. Since Owner once paid five bucks for a Mason jar of mud labeled "Mississippi River Water," someone could catch a mess of bream, stick little plastic teeth in their mouths and sell 'em as Felsenthal Faux Piranha.

Until next time, Kalaka thanks Jimmy and Janet for the gift and reminds them to keep their hands and feet in the boat.

Otus the Head Cat's weekly humor column is celestially faxed each week to Owner (or Miss Celia on occasion) and reprinted here every Saturday.



Janet and Jimmy Davidson display a real stuffed piranha they brought back from Brazil.

ter and Union County Arkansas Game and Fish Commission wildlife officers scrambled to allay public concerns as "some people were scared to death."

The entire bizarre story was fully covered on Page 1A of the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* on Feb. 21.

What the account could not report was the confession on March 8 by the Crossett hunters of what they actually saw. Turns out the good ol' boys had begun the day with a couple of cases of Lone Star and by the time they saw the piranha "attack" they were feeling no pain. In fact, they were ripe for alien abduction.

It seems that rather than witnessing



George “GOOBER” Lindsay enjoyed wearing my captain’s cap when aboard our yacht.

Jim Davidson Honored By Publishers

Jim Davidson of Batesville, owner of 14 cable television systems and Davco Electronics Corporation, Tuesday received a framed certificate naming him as the only honorary editor of the most prominent trade publication in the CATV industry.

The honor was bestowed by the editors and publishers of TV Communications, one of the publications of Communications Publishing Corporation of Oklahoma City, Okla.

The firm publishes both weekly and monthly magazines as well as several industry directories and other special publications. Circulation of the TV Communications magazine

covers the United States and foreign countries.

Flying to Batesville for the presentation were Stanley M. Searle, editor and publisher, and Robert D. Lee, advertising sales. They were photographed with Davidson during the presentation.

The photo and story was featured in the national publication. The framed certificate was signed by publishers Searle and Patrick T. Pogue.

While in Batesville, the visitors inspected the Davco Electronics plant and gathered information for another feature story on Davidson's CATV operations in Arkansas. The cable system in Batesville was the first to be installed in Arkansas, and now there are about 60, of which 14 are owned and operated by Mr. Davidson.

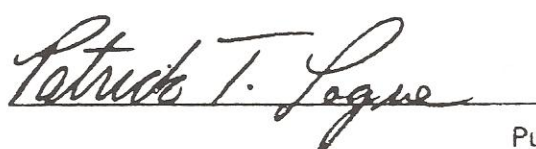
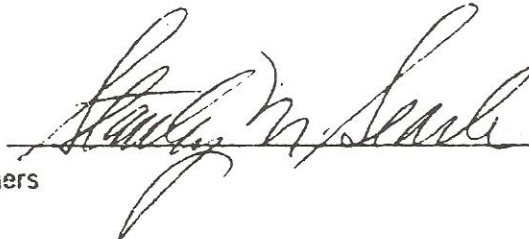
The Davco Company has installed and maintained many of the other systems in the state, as well as other states throughout the country.

*In Appreciation
of his
Continuing Support Since Becoming
the First Advertiser of
TV Communications Magazine*

Jim Davidson

is hereby named

Honorary Editor

 
Publishers

JUNE 1968

Copy of text on plaque

BATESVILLE GUARD

Established 1876
BATESVILLE, ARKANSAS
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 19, 1968



June, 1968 - Denver, Colorado publisher Stanley Searle presents Jimmy Davidson with 'Honorary Editor' certificate for Television-Communications magazine. Writer/photographer Davidson is a frequent contributor to various publications.

I have many awards on my "Vanity Wall" but this one is among my most prized.



From left to right, the late Polly Dunn of Columbus TV Cable, Jimmy and Janet Davidson of DAVCO Electronics in Arkansas and Beverly Murphy of NCTA. Jimmy and Janet flew their airplane to Columbus, Mississippi and picked up Polly and Beverly and then flew on to New Orleans. The date was June 16, 1974. It was Jimmy and Janet's treat to celebrate Beverly's birthday.



Jack Treece showing off his plaque

The following four paragraphs are the last page of a speech that I made to the Arkansas Cable Television Associations annual meeting on March 6, 1986. The recipient of the annual J.Y. Davidson Award was Jack Treece, a true cable pioneer and dear friend. In my speech I had just alluded to the FCC rules that Jack, myself and many others were lobbying Congress in order to protect our businesses.

Tonight's recipient struggled with the rest of us through the maze of insane regulations and technical rules, as did many others in this room. Most of us could ill afford the expense and time from our systems that this regulatory overkill caused.

But tonight's recipient was right there with us when the going was rough. His background in electronics was invaluable in building and operating his own cable systems, and from pioneers like him came many early innovations. Tonight's recipient and I share many fond memories and have very similar backgrounds. Here are just a few:

In addition to being early founders of cable TV, we are both World War II veterans, have both been in the home appliance business, refrigeration and electrical, radio and electronics, jewelry and gemology and other related fields. We both hold commercial pilot's licenses and have been flying continuously for more than forty years. We have been close throughout the pioneering days of cable, and share many fond memories and experiences. May I present my good, long-time friend, from Marshall and Heber Springs, Jack Treece!

-o-

Jack came to the podium with tears in his eyes and was so choked up that he was unable to say a word. Later, he said that it was only near the end of my talk when he suddenly realized that I was talking about him. After the meeting Janet and I stayed up most of the night reminiscing with Jack, Don Thompson, Bob Rogers and others.

ABOARD THE QE-2 FOR THE FIVE DAY CRUISE TO ENGLAND
August, 1993

**Cable pioneer, Jack Treece and wife Bobbie of Heber Springs, AR
with Jimmy and Janet Davidson of Cabot, AR**





In Chicago, Illinois I received the "Outstanding Committee Chairman Award" from FCC chairman Richard Wiley. The award was for 1973-74. Looking on next to me is Polly Dunn of Columbus TV Cable. Also looking on is Beverly Murphy of NCTA and H.E. Jackson, President of the South Central CATV Association.



SOUTHERN CATV ASSOCIATION MEETING - Biloxi, Mississippi - late 60's or early 70's. TOP ROW, left to right: Wally Briscoe and Bob L'Heureux of NCTA, Jimmy Davidson of DAVCO in Arkansas, Fred Stevenson, (?), and Bill Daniels of Daniels & Associates in Denver. BOTTOM ROW, left to right: Hattiesburg, MS Mayor Claude F. Pittman, Jr., Mississippi Governor Paul B. Johnson, Jr., Bob Jernigan of Hattiesburg, MS and Polly Dunn of Columbus, MS.

1967 Mississippi Cable TV Association Meeting



From Left: Jim Davidson of DAVCO, John Humphries of Biloxi, MS, Millie Smith of Hattiesburg, MS, Odessa Powell of Ferriday, LA, and Dan Boyd of Hattiesburg, MS.



From Left: J.D. Pierce of DAVCO, (?), Sam Phillips of Starkville, MS, Ira Crosby of Indianola, MS and Grady Perkins of Supreme Instruments in Greenwood, MS. (Many years ago when I was a youngster in my early teens I had some of Supreme Instruments test equipment.)



Here I am flanked by Millie Smith and Travis Nabors of Mississippi.



**From left: Jim Ackerman of Indianapolis, IN,
with Frank & Chris Thompson of Las Vegas**



Travis Nabors of Columbus, MS, Bill Dunlap of Tupelo, MS and Jimmy Davidson of DAVCO



Betty & Don Atchison of Decatur, AL, Jimmy & Janet Davidson of Arkansas



Millie Smith and Jasper Love of Hattiesburg, Mississippi

Davidson brought first cable TV in the state to Batesville in 1948

By Frank Wallis

Guard Staff Writer

James Yates Davidson was an easy fellow to find about a half century ago. During the daylight hours you could find him seated in his inventor's chair underneath a tent he borrowed from Crouch Funeral Home.

The invention — a rhombic-shaped antenna that would catch and retransmit the WMCT Memphis television signal throughout the state's first cable television system.

The location was a hilltop southwest of Batesville in the community of Ruddell Hill.

Davidson commissioned the creation of a 1/16th-scale model of that

first rhombic antenna for display in the Old Independence Regional Museum that will open in September.

In its actual size, the horizontal rhombic-shaped configuration of copper wires, attached to four towers, encompassed a land area of several acres.

He presented the model Wednesday along with documents and narratives explaining the evolution of the cable television business in Arkansas that started with Davidson's rhombic antenna and cable transmission system in Batesville.

The invention process and the industry it created were not without hazards. With friends at the museum

Wednesday, Davidson recalled being at the antenna site alone one morning when a powerful storm ripped the tent and rigging from the ground and sent it flying into the woods. The rain drenched and ruined his sensitive electronic equipment.

Davidson said the industry changed more rapidly than anyone in television broadcasting could anticipate.

In October, 1948, Davidson's company, DAVCO Electronics, would sign up its first subscriber. The package: cable-quality reception of the WMCT Memphis television signal. The station broadcast three hours (Please see Cable TV, page 3)



FIRST MODEL

Digital image by Frank Wallis

Viewing a model of the equipment that brought the first cable TV service in the state to Batesville 50 years ago are, from left, Dwayne Millikin, Wilson Powell, J.Y. Davidson, Janet Davidson, Nelson Barnett, vice president, and Twyla Wright, president of the board of trustees of the Old Independence Regional Museum. The museum, which will open next month at Ninth and Vine streets, will house the model.

Cable TV

(Continued from page 1)

nightly.

"For the first five years of my cable television career, my subscribers were clamoring for my lone channel, WMCT in Memphis. This is all I had available for them and they were quite willing to pay for it," Davidson said. "I recall people staring in awe at the old Indian head test pattern. When there were pictures, some would accuse me of trickery, stating 'It's not possible to throw pictures through the air'."

On Sept. 19, 1953, DAVCO Electronics doubled its offering as KATV Channel 7 in Little Rock began broadcasting. Not quite a year later KARK Channel 4 began broadcasting, followed by KTHV Channel 11 in November 1955, Davidson said.

DAVCO stayed ahead of the competition by offering up to 12 channels when competitors offered three. DAVCO Electronics also entered the business of building those cable television systems for investors.

By 1982, TCA cable television based in Tyler, Texas, had completed the third leg of an acquisition for DAVCO Electronics cable systems.

The last group of DAVCO systems sold to TCA included the Batesville system managed by Dwayne Millikin who began work with DAVCO in 1964, Davidson said.

During DAVCO's years of peak business, the company created a very large inventory of cable supplies and equipment including another of Davidson's inventions — the DAVCO Functional Design head-in. The products were shipped to DAVCO customers in every state.

"In the early years I designed what I called my 'Functional Design' head-end which allowed up to 12

channels when competition was delivering only three channels," Davidson said. "In our lab, we put together and custom aligned hundreds of racks of these cable television head-ends."

Davidson purchased an airplane that he piloted himself for deliveries and customer calls.

"Last year, 1997, marked my 52nd year of flying and I had to ground myself due to health problems and sell out a beautiful twin-engine airplane. It was a very emotional experience for me when Janet and I watched as our airplane soared off from the Little Rock Municipal Airport. Our broker sold it to someone in South America and we understand it is being used for passenger and freight service in Brazil and Venezuela," Davidson said.

Davidson said he is proud that Batesville was the first market for Arkansas' first full-fledged cable system and equally proud of the many friendships that were created during his work here.

"I am happy to donate the model of my first rhombic antenna as well as these albums to the Old Independence Regional Museum. These are identical to the ones that were donated to the National Cable Television Center and Museum at the University of Colorado at Denver."

Of the modern 150-channel satellite television broadcast system, Davidson said viewers will find an abundance of programming that is "pure garbage...psychic readers, 30-minute infomercials selling every conceivable commodity or service, much of it worthless scams."

"I still say give me 12 good quality channels and that ought to be enough for anyone," he said.

(This is the text on the plaque with the rhombic model)

**DONATED TO THE NATIONAL CABLE TELEVISION CENTER
& MUSEUM**

**BY THE JAMES YATES DAVIDSON CABLE TELEVISION FOUNDATION
James Yates Davidson, Founder - June 8, 1998**

In the beginning we called it "community antenna" but for this plaque I will refer to "cable." Long before the advent of satellite technology and myriad channels available on a 24 hour basis, cable pioneers went to great lengths and expense to receive television signals. None of us in the late 40's thought that cable television would ever be feasible in major cities where television channels could be picked up on a simple home antenna. We thought that cable would only be feasible in fringe areas or in valleys where mountains shielded signals. In the early days many of us thought that no more than three channels would ever be needed.

This 1/16th scale model depicts the large rhombic antenna that I designed and constructed on Ruddle Hill southwest of Batesville, Arkansas for receiving the only television station available, WMCT in Memphis, Tennessee, 114 air miles distant. (To my knowledge, it was the first rhombic antenna designed and constructed specifically for cable television.) WMCT was granted a permit to construct a television station on November 28, 1947 and began broadcasting occasional test patterns in the fall of 1948. Limited programming began in September and October of 1948. Their first live program was a Tennessee - Ole Miss football game on Saturday, Nov. 13, 1948. Programming in the beginning was limited to about 3 hours each night. Two of my rhombic's original four towers still stand on Ruddle Hill today. If anyone is interested in visiting this historic site turn left on Tower Road to the Robert Kelley farm. I used 1,400 feet of high-strength copper clad steel wire which I stretched tight in this 3-bay rhombic antenna. The towers were on a sloping hillside, 70 to 80 feet high and level at the tops. The entire antenna including guy wires covered several acres. For several years this was the only channel on my systems. Subscribers paid \$150 for the installation and \$3.00 monthly. In the 50's I designed and constructed several other rhombic antennae for turnkey systems we built for others. In our efforts to receive television signals in fringe areas, we also constructed tall towers, up to 500', with massive yagi antenna arrays. Prior to this rhombic antenna I had a small cable TV system in Tuckerman, Arkansas where I connected my first subscriber in October of 1948. Later, my company in Batesville, DAVCO Electronics, Inc., ultimately stocked about 2,000 items and supplied cable customers in every state.



What am I doing handing Strat a five dollar bill?

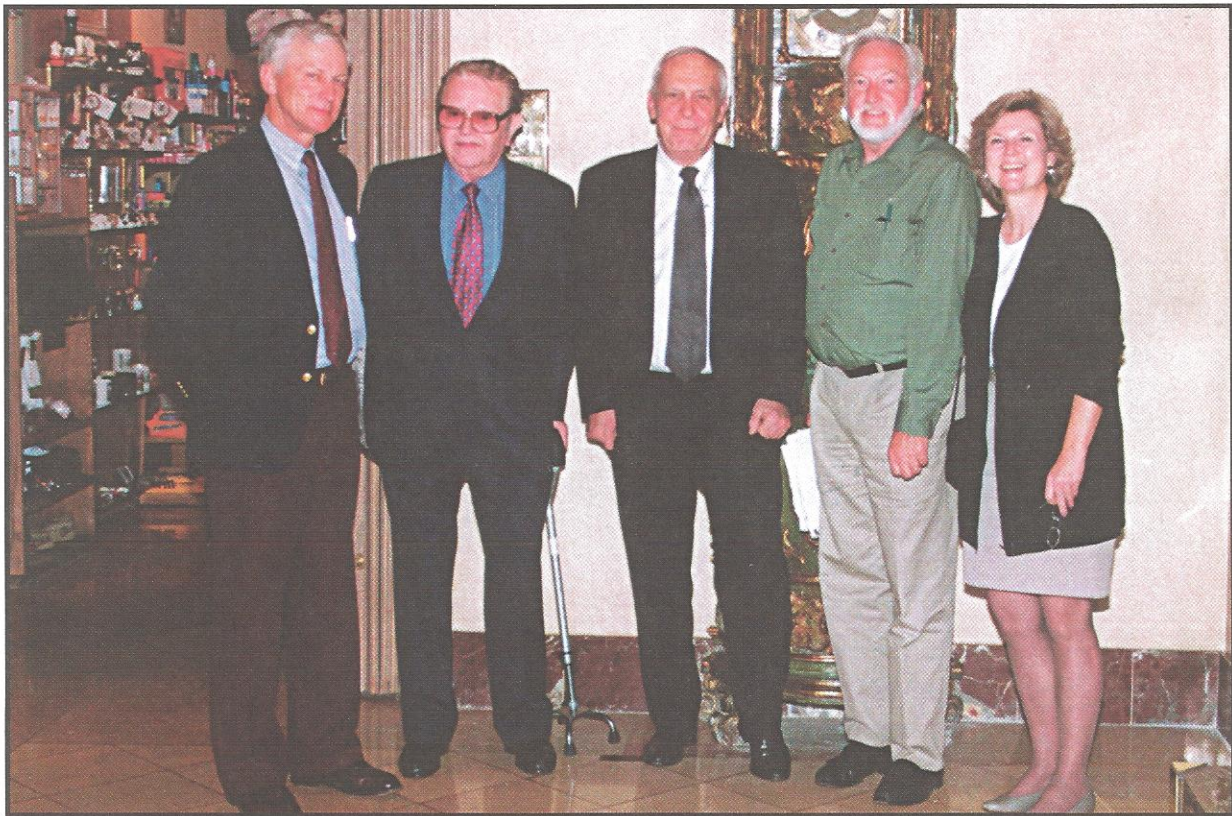


**From left: Virginia and Sanford Randolph of Bridgeport, West Virginia
Burt Harris of Los Angeles and Jimmy Davidson of Arkansas**

**ON JUNE 8, 1998 JANET AND I VISIT THE NATIONAL
CABLE CENTER AND MUSEUM IN DENVER**



President Marlowe Froke, left, is shown receiving Davidson's rhombic antenna model which he donated to the National Cable Television Center & Museum.



Attending dinner in Denver were from left to right: Stan Searle, cable system owner and former publisher, cable pioneer, Jimmy Davidson who is currently celebrating the 50th anniversary of his first subscriber. Next is Marlowe Froke, President of the National Cable Television Center and Museum, Rex Porter, Editor of Communications Technology and Kim Dority, library director. Not shown is Janet Davidson who took the photograph.



THE NATIONAL
CABLE TELEVISION
CENTER AND MUSEUM

2200 South Josephine Street
Denver, CO 80208

Tel: 303/871-4885
Fax: 303/871-4514

E-Mail: info@cablecenter.org
Web Site: www.cablecenter.org

June 24, 1998

Mr. and Mrs. James Davidson
P.O. Box 1053
Cabot, Arkansas 72023

Dear Jim and Janet:

I wanted to let you know that the antenna display drew lots of attention at the SCTE Expo in Denver. It occupied a prominent place in the "Time Line" display about 50 years of cable television.

Your display now is in my office at 2200 South Josephine where it will be seen by everyone who comes to my office. Later, in the year 2000, it will be moved to the new building.

Thank you, too, for the very special gift of your visit to Denver. It was an exceptionally memorable and pleasant occasion for all of us.

The staff of The Center looks forward to a continued relationship with you and your legacy.

With every good wish

Sincerely,

Marlowe Froke

CC: William Bresnan

- JULY, 1997 -

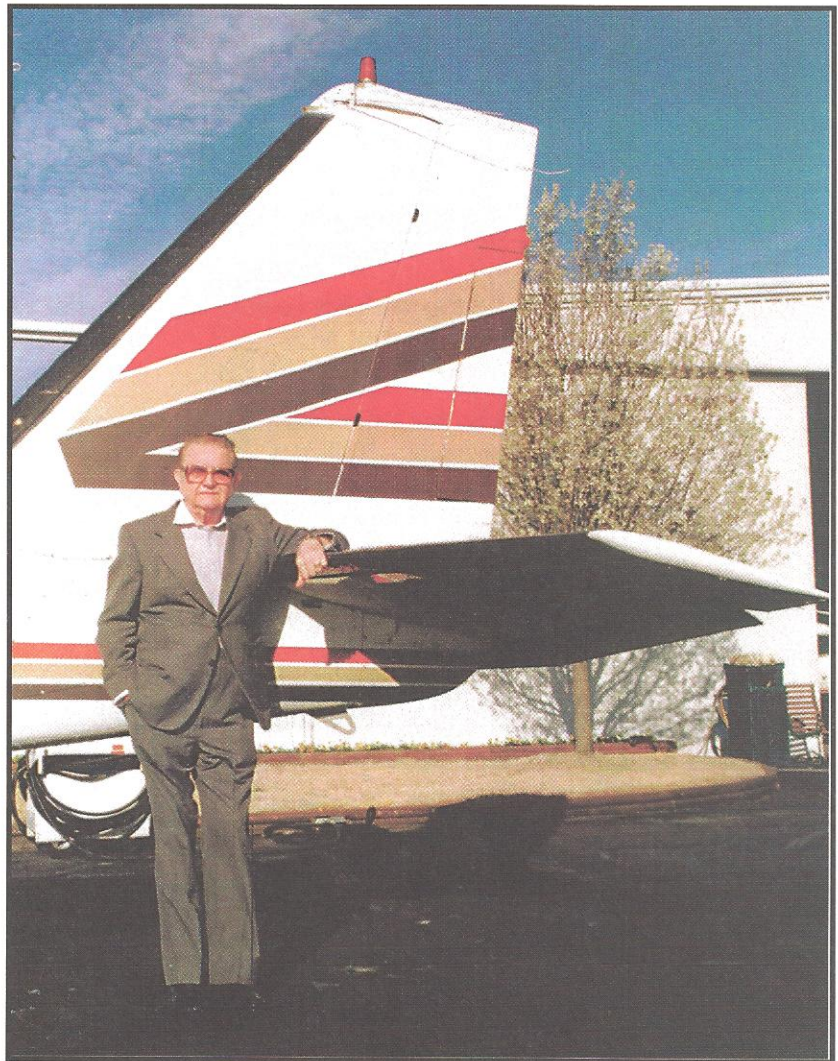


Shown above is Jimmy and Janet Davidson beside their beautiful twin-engine airplane in mid 1997 shortly before Jimmy grounded himself for health reasons. After 52 years and 17,000 hours of flying, it was a very emotional experience for Jimmy to stop flying.

Soon after these pictures were made, Jimmy spent 74 days in the hospital and endured four major surgeries and other serious complications.

Janet took the picture at right of Jimmy posing by their airplane's big tail. This was just before the broker took off with their airplane and this was the last time that Jimmy and Janet saw their beautiful airplane that they had flown to so many far away places.

The broker sold it to a South American whom we believe is using it to carry passengers and freight. Most of Jimmy's 17,000 hours of flying were in connection with his DAVCO Electronics and his cable systems and his cable customers.



During his cable career Jimmy Davidson owned nine different airplanes and even operated an FAA Part 135 charter service for a while. The charter service was very successful but Davidson ceased operations in less than a year because it was interfering with his cable operations.

GREETINGS FROM LAS VEGAS, NEVADA
Frank and Chris Thompson

Thursday, October 8, 1998

October, 1948 - October, 1998
50 Years of Cable TV
"And They Will Be Remembered"

Two score and ten years ago, there was brought forth upon this continent a new industry - cable TV.

Only a few saw its future then and its success was given - how, when, and where.

Starting small and with limited resources, cable grew, and grew, and grew because of the faith and energy of a very few.

There was Jim Davidson and Morty Malarky, Bill Daniels and Frank Thompson, there was Bob Tarlton, Bob Magness and John Walsonovich, and Gene Schneider, Ben Conroy and Glen Flinn, there was Strat Smith, Fred Stevenson, Homer Berger and Charley Clements, too, and a few others who kept the faith as cable grew.

They fought the battles against all odds - against the FCC, the broadcasters and the phone companies too, fought when their allies were very few - when only their subscribers were on their side. Knowing that cable filled a need, they won over all and the broadcasters' greed.

Among those listed, he too with his back to the wall, Jim Davidson was among those few who stood true and tall.

Like other pioneers who built the railroads, those who filled the sky with planes, the roads with the cars - these cable pioneers, like Jim, made life better for all.

And there is in his life a true pioneer wife who, literally, probably saved his life. "In sickness and in health," the saying goes, and Janet was there for the highs and the lows. Several times Jim was headed for the hearse but refused to go. Why? Because of his love for Janet, his wife and loving nurse.

When Jim approaches the Pearly Gates, St. Peter will not say, "Why did you raise your cable rates?" No, he will say, "Jim, come right in my son, and congratulations for a job well done."

Hey Davidson, we luv ya'.

Frank and Chris Thompson

*Sorry that I can't be there to
read this in person but we read
this in spirit.*
FTC

Mr. & Mrs. J. Y. Davidson
DAVCO CORPORATION
P. O. Box 1053
Cabot, Arkansas 72023
FAX (501) 843-6226

Dear Friends,

October 9, 1998

I could not have put this book together without the help of my wife, Janet Marie, and our able assistant Diann Lawrence Poore. The three of us have worked diligently going through boxes and files to select photos and materials that we thought would be of interest to the reader. I have also included several writings that may surprise some.

In the era where photos were not available I utilized the talents of two great artists to draw depictive illustrations, John Deering and Vic Harville.

This book just barely touches on my cable days and personal history. To chronicle all of the materials and old photos that we have would fill volumes and take a tremendous amount of time and work.

Actually, I am writing this on Friday, October 9, 1998 after our return yesterday from a most enjoyable visit to Newport, Arkansas. We were invited to the TCA cable office there for a party but did not realize that it would be in my honor to celebrate my first subscriber which was 50 years ago this month. What a surprise! Louis French who helped me put up the tower and worked with me in my early days of cable was there. (TCA purchased a number of cable systems including the Newport cable system from us on January 1, 1982.) Manager Paul Eddington and other long time TCA employees did an outstanding job of putting this event together. A tent was set up just outside the cable office with multi-colored balloons, food and a festive atmosphere. I was interviewed by several television camera crews and newspaper reporters. TCA managers from other cable systems joined the large crowd of people attending the event.

A highlight of the party was the presence of Dallas Cowboys star linebacker Bob Lilly who was admitted to the Hall of Fame in 1980. A very great guy, Bob works and travels for TCA as a spokesperson. Bob graciously autographed his pictures in Cowboy uniform jersey number 74 for the large crowd in attendance.

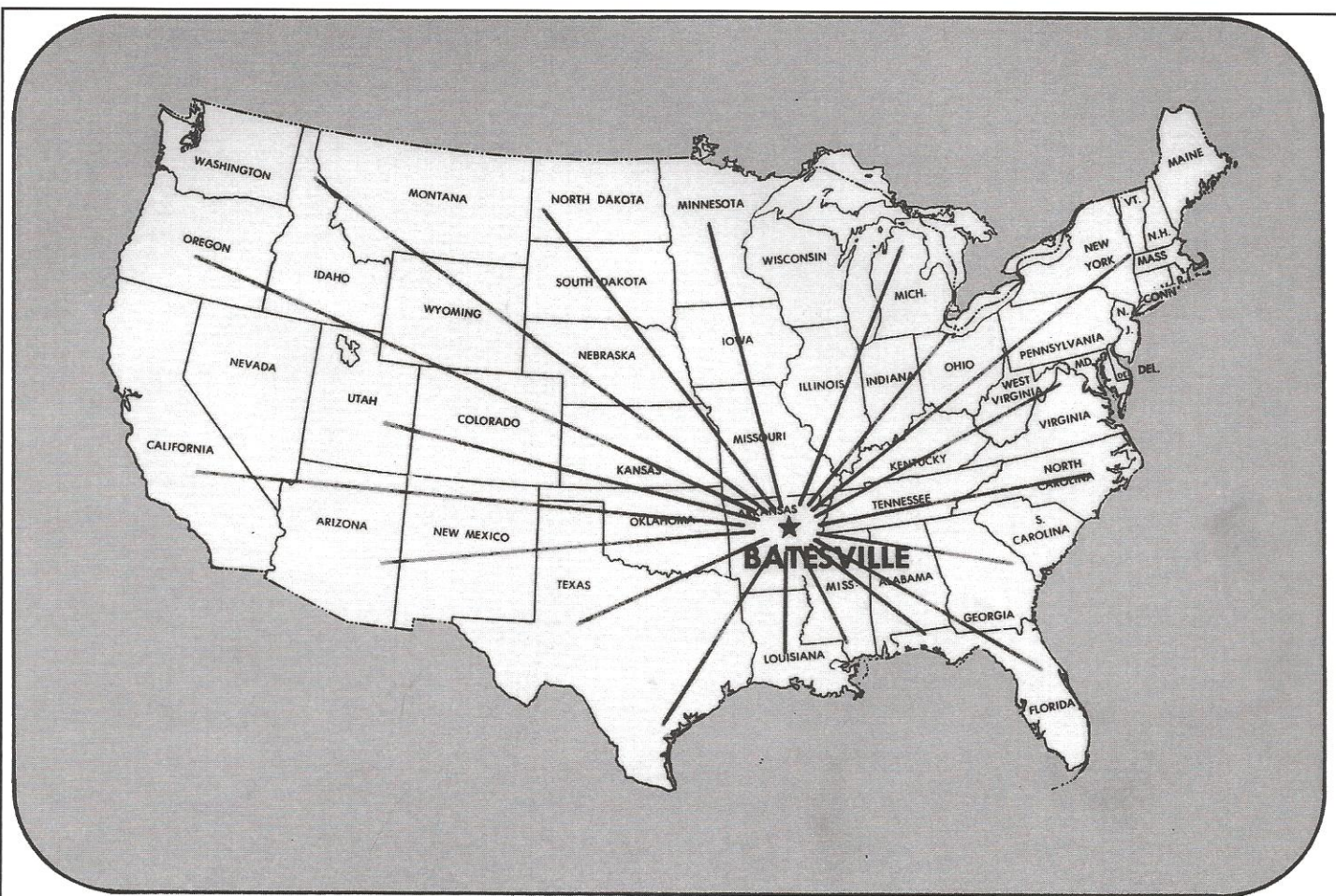
I say a very special thanks to Doyle Oden of K-D Graphics for adding this page at the last minute which gives him only seven days to complete this 175-page book before our October 16th deadline.

I hope that this book will bring back memories for many and will prove of interest to all. Though it's been a lot of hard work, we have thoroughly enjoyed putting this book together. I would sincerely appreciate your comments after you have read it all. I may be reached at the address or fax number on this letterhead.

Sincerely,



J. Y. Davidson



Your No. 1 CATV Supplier **Located in the Center of CATV, U.S.A.**

For years DAVCO ELECTRONICS has been supplier to the CATV industry. We've shipped thousands of items to hundreds of systems. We've consulted, engineered, built and promoted. We've gained a world of experience.

We concentrate on CATV. If you have a problem . . . or need materials . . . call on us. You'll receive the most complete CATV Distributor service you can get and we'll back it with the same-day shipment to boost your profits.

Try us for your system needs . . . Write or call us today.

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EXCLUSIVELY TO CATV!

*You're invited . . .
to visit Davco's new, modern facility in
Batesville, home of the world's finest community
antenna systems.*

Jim Davidson

TWO FAMOUS NAMES IN CATV:

DAVCO and **entron**

Davco stocks everything for CATV . . . all under one roof! It is important that you know about the unusual "CATV Supermarket" maintained by Davco Electronics Corporation. If you don't have one of Davco's new three-inch loose-leaf catalogs, please let us know. We will be pleased to mail one to you and place your name in our catalog register for future additions.

DAVCO ELECTRONICS CORPORATION

P.O. Drawer 861 — Phone RI 3-3816 — Batesville, Ark.

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