

CABLE TELEVISION (CATV)

by

R. J. Reiman, Historian

E. L. Parsons of KAST, Astoria Oregon, in the summer of 1949, erected an antenna system to receive Station KING-TV, Seattle, from 125 miles away, and he distributed the signal received by coaxial cable to twenty five "subscribing neighbors". This may have been the first installation of Cable Television. The concept spread to small towns in Pennsylvania and Washington.

The growth of CATV can be divided into three phases, the first being the one just described, where the range of local TV is extended to "fill holes" in their normal coverage area created by mountains or other obstructions or interferences. These systems are small, locally owned, and are called "community antenna systems". The second, or "distant station importation", began in the late 1950's, and utilized microwave to transmit signals from broadcast stations to cable systems located far outside their normal service areas. These were first called "community antenna systems" and later "cable television" or "CATV" and a host of regulatory and copyright problems were created and local broadcasters had new competition. The third phase began in the late 1970's with the use of satellites to distribute programs to cable systems. Nationwide distribution of programs that did not originate on TV Stations now became profitable. The development of the third phase increased the size and scope of CATV with 8,500 systems, 42,750,000 subscribers and almost 50 percent of the country's television homes on cable by January 1, 1988.

For a typical cable television system (see Figure 1), signals received either from satellite, microwave, or from a nearby broadcast station, are then processed, combined and fed into a coaxial cable supertrunk. From there, signals are fed into distribution system trunks through a splitter and brought into homes through subscribers drops. The amplifiers must be carefully designed to compensate for greater attenuation of cable at higher frequencies. Cable attenuation is typically 20 times greater at 500 MHz than at 50 MHz. They must also have precise automatic gain control to adjust for temperature variations which affect cable attenuation. The amplifier spacing is a trade-off between noise if the spacing is too great, to cross talk if the spacing is too small. A coaxial cable's high signal attenuation and limited bandwidth preclude the transmission of digital transmission. Special set-top converters are needed on UHF signals because of attenuation limitations.

The solution to attenuation and bandwidth problems lay in the use of fiber-optic cable with an advantage of 10,000 to 1 over coaxial cable, and digital can be used to get noise-free and interference-free reception.

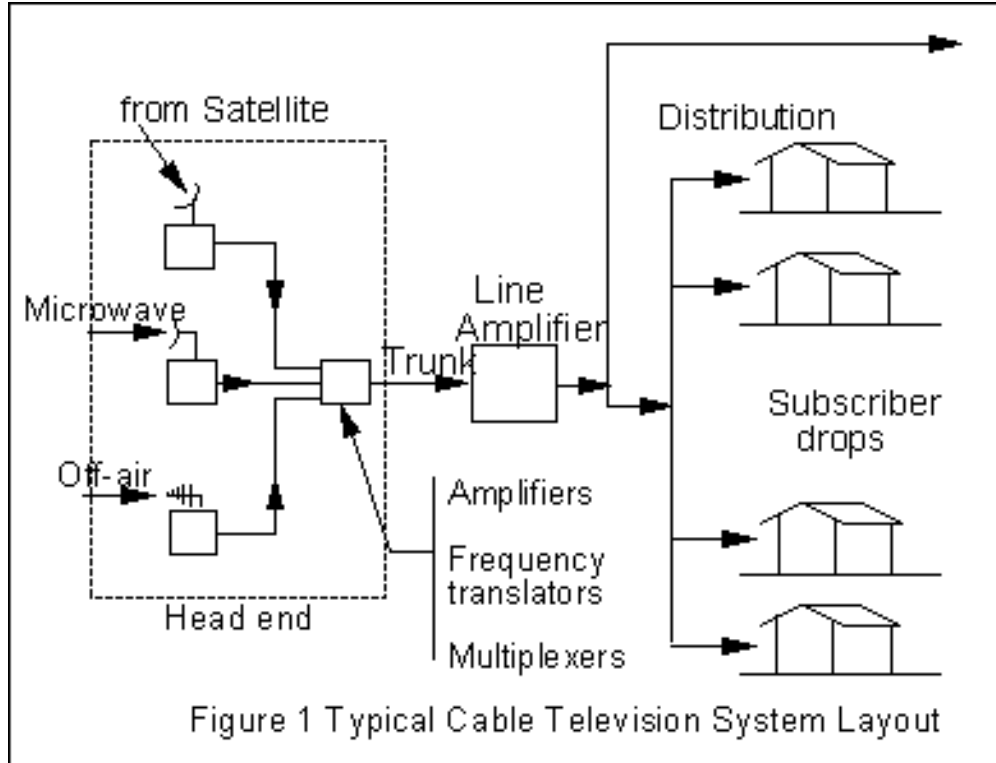


Figure 1 Typical Cable Television System Layout

The digital to analog converter is expensive for digital, and all analog with a hybrid of fiber on long trunks and coaxial on short simplifies the system. Since fiber-optic systems can handle both telephone and video signals, competition between telephone and CATV is ongoing. Cable broadcasts erode local TV broadcast audience and is a subject of FCC regulation. Direct satellite broadcasting is competition for CATV. Future prospects for CATV include HDTV programs and the prospects are bright.



Robert Denison Holmes

1957-1959

Born in Canisteo, New York on May 11, 1909 to stockbroker George H. and Amy (Crary) Holmes; a Christian Scientist. Brother of two sisters and three brothers. Married to Marie Hoy of Portland in 1934. After graduation from Rochester's West High School in 1925, Holmes' family moved to Oregon. Following a brief period of work with Portland's newspapers, he enrolled at the University of Oregon in 1928, graduating in 1932. Moved to Clatsop County in 1937; engaged in advertising and radio work; became manager of Astoria's station KAST from 1943 to 1957. He showed an interest in improving education and served on both the Gearhart City and the Clatsop County rural boards before 1948. Changing his party affiliation from Republican to Democrat, Holmes was elected to the State Senate in 1948, the first Democrat from Clatsop County in sixty-four years. He won reelection in 1952. In 1953, he was named chairman of the Education Committee by Republican Governor Patterson and won statewide recognition for his efforts to strengthen the state's system of education. Also, he was actively involved in the transformation of the Democratic Party from a tool of conservative patriarchs into a viable organization offering a liberal response to Eisenhower Republicanism. Just days after Governor Patterson's death in 1956, Holmes declared his candidacy for the Democratic nomination and defeated the conservative champion, Lew Wallace, 112,307 votes to 108,822. Strengthened by Wayne Morse's Senate campaign against Douglas McKay, Holmes won a slim victory over Elmo Smith in the general election, 361,840 votes to 267,934. Democrats won three of the four races for Congress, and Morse beat McKay. More importantly, the Democratic Party now had an organization built upon a solid majority of registered voters, reflected in Democratic control of the State Legislature for the first time since 1878. In his two years as governor, Holmes sought, with partial success, to revise state government to make it more efficient and responsive. He secured the first Department for Economic Planning. He reduced the bloated state reserve, by reducing taxes some sixteen percent, and by adopting social welfare and education measures that Republicans had ignored. He pressed for improved conditions and wages for workers, for public power development, and for the abolition of capital punishment in Oregon. In 1958, Holmes dispatched his primary opposition easily, but he faced a formidable young Republican candidate, Mark Hatfield, in the general election. Hurt by campaign tactics of others, criticized for commuting three death sentences to life imprisonment, attacked for cancelling the hunting season because of dry weather just before the election, and most of all, incapable of matching the adroit performance of his opponent, Holmes lost thirty-one of the thirty-six counties, gaining only 267,934 votes to Hatfield's 331,900. Holmes returned to consulting, public relations, and public service. He conducted Portland's KOIN-TV program, "Let's Face It," discussing issues of the day. Later, he was named to the State Board of Higher Education.

He resigned in 1974 as a protest against what he saw as legislative interference with the institutions. He also served on the commission to draft a revision of the Oregon Constitution. Holmes died of cancer in an Astoria hospital on June 6, 1976. After public services in Seaside, private services were held at Greenwood Crematorium in Astoria.

Bibliography:

1. Robert C. Burton, *Democrats of Oregon: The Pattern of Minority Politics, 1900-1956* (Eugene, 1970).
2. Manuscript materials for Holmes' governorship are in the Oregon State Archives, Salem.
Correspondence and documents for the 1958 campaign are in Special Collections, University of Oregon Library. Eugene.
3. Political Graveyard
4. Holmes, Robert D.-archives page

Source:

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Leroy E. "Ed" Parsons (1907 - 1990)

Major Positions Held:

Founder, Communication Supply, Inc;

Builder/developer, CATV system in Astoria, Oregon, (1948)

Major Achievements:

Born in Oregon, Parsons attended engineering trade schools and worked as the chief engineer for Bridal Veil Timber Company, Harris Machine Works of OR, and purchased radio station KAST in 1942. He also served as a communications engineer and assistant to the president of Wein Airlines, sales manager and field engineer for Northern Radio Company of Seattle. He was a commercial airlines pilot. In cooperation with the Scandinavian Air Force, Parsons built the Alaska communications system necessary for the first commercial trans-polar flight. He completed construction and initial programming of the first Eskimo-speaking broadcast station, KRBW. As a consulting communications engineer for Husky Oil Company, he was instrumental in Arctic telecommunications development and Husky's commercial network which facilitated oil exploration on the national petroleum reserve in Alaska.

In May, 1968, Parsons was acknowledged as the father of community antenna television. A granite monument was erected at the base of the famed "Astoria Column" on Coxcomb Hill. The inscription reads:

"Site of the first community antenna television installation in the United States completed February 1949 Astoria, Oregon. Cable television was invented and developed by L. E. (Ed) Parsons on Thanksgiving Day, 1948. The system carried the first TV transmission by KRSC-TV, Channel 5, Seattle. This marked the beginning of Cable TV."*

Parsons was a member of the NCTA Pioneer Club. He was a member of the OX 5 Club and chairman of the President's Committee for Hiring the Handicapped. He authored a number of articles for trade journals and was profiled in *The Last of the Bush Pilots*, *The Great Land* and *Alaska Today*.

* From *CATV: A History of Community Antenna Television* by Mary Alice Mayer Phillips, Northwestern University Press, 1972.

An Afternoon with Jacques

By Janice Leber

My original interview with Cousteau ended up doing double duty. My first job out of college was as a news director at KAST-AM in Astoria, Oregon, a seagoing town -- just when the U.S. territorial limit was being increased from 12 to 100 miles out to sea. In my interview conducted 18 months previously Cousteau had spoken about this, about what a bad idea it was to try to "claim" part of the ocean because "your sea today is my sea tomorrow." I was able to use clips of Cousteau for a big local news story, and my boss was astounded at my great connections.

Governor Robert D. Holmes

Biographical Note

Robert Holmes was governor from January 14, 1957 to January 12, 1959.

Holmes was born in Canisteo, New York in May 11, 1909. After he graduated from Rochester's West High School in 1925, his family moved to Oregon. He graduated from the University of Oregon in 1932 and married Marie Hoy in 1934. After some newspaper experience on The Oregonian and the Oregon Journal he went to Astoria and managed radio station KAST.

Holmes showed an interest in improving education and served on the Gearhart City and the Clatsop County rural school boards before 1948. He changed his party affiliation from Republican to Democrat and was elected to the State Senate in 1948 and reelected in 1952. In 1953 he was named chairman of the Senate Education Committee by Republican Governor Patterson and won statewide recognition for his efforts to strengthen the state's system of education. Just days after Governor Paterson's death in 1956 Holmes declared his candidacy for the Democratic nomination. He defeated Elmo Smith in the general election.

In his two years as governor Holmes worked at revising state government to make it more efficient and responsive. He created the first Department for Economic Planning. He reduced taxes by sixteen percent and was instrumental in creating new social welfare and education laws. He pressed for improved conditions and wages for workers, for public power development, and for the abolition of capital punishment in Oregon.

After he was defeated by Mark Hatfield in the 1958 general election, Robert Holmes returned to consulting, public relations, and public service. He conducted Portland's KOIN-TV program, "Let's Face It", which discussed issues of the day. He was named to the State Board of Higher Education in 1969 and resigned in 1974. He served on the commission to draft a revision of the Oregon Constitution during 1961 and 1962. Holmes died of cancer on June 6, 1976.