

# History of Oran Mutual Phone Company

The **Oran Mutual Telephone Company**, Oran, Iowa was incorporated on January 26, 1911.

In January 1914 assets of the company totaled \$3,301.61, which included lines, real estate, tools, equipment and a home which served as the office. At that time, Mr. L.A. Radke was manager and switch operator for a salary of \$45.00 per month. Telephone rent was \$1.00 per month, payable quarterly. Shares of stock were sold for \$25.00.

Mr. Chas Yeager took care of all lines in 1915 and his salary was 20 cents per hour. If he furnished horse and buggy, salary went up to 25 cents per hour. If he furnished a team or horses and himself, salary was 30 cents per hour. His total wage for three and a half months was \$24.50.

On January 1, 1916 there were 63 stockholders and 57 rented phones. The manager's salary was raised to \$55.00 per month and secretary salary to \$25.00 per year.

Manager from 1926-1936 was A.C. Harms. February 1936 through October 1944 had F.J. Meier as manager. Harry Cosselman took over from 1944-1950.

At the annual meeting in January 1949, L.C. Youngblut was elected President; L.J. Suhr, vice president and other directors included Floyd Bahe, Wilbert Wedemeier, Helmuth Westendorf, Earl Shippy and Lewis Reith. In March 1949, \$2,500 was borrowed to start rebuilding lines. A railroad car load of poles and rolls of wire were ordered. L.J. Suhr and L.C. Youngblut were busy all summer and fall getting these lines rebuilt. An additional lot of ground was purchased just north of the office (house) for expansion. Motion was made at the June 1950 meeting that \$1.50 be charged for all "General Rings" outside of an emergency. E.L. Von Emery was manager at this time. There were 39 stockholders and 101 rented stations, a total of 140 stations.

In June 1951 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Phelps were hired at \$140.00 per month as operator and manager.

At a special meeting in 1957 the board voted to purchase a Leich dial switch for \$11,000.63. On December 27, 1957 Dale Cummings was hired as manager-secretary. A new building was built for the new switch. Rates at that time were: Business - 1 party \$5.25; Business - 2 party \$4.50; Residence - 1 party \$4.75; Residence - 2 party \$4.00; Residence - 4 party \$3.15; and Rural \$3.25.

In September 1958 the first service truck was purchased, a 1951 GMC pickup for \$275.00.

Additional stock was sold in 1957 and as of July 7, 1958, stock totaled 536 shares.

In 1962 stockholders were paid an 8% dividend on the \$25.00 share. Prior to this the dividend hadn't been over 5%.

January 1964 was the first year the company did over \$20,000 worth of business. Board members received \$3.00 for each board meeting.

1965 was the beginning of buried cable. Two and one half miles west of town was buried in that year.

In 1967 Dale & Beverly Cummings resigned as manager and secretary. Maxine Benzine was hired as secretary and Harold Schmit as manager. In 1958 Maxine's salary was raised to \$85.00 per month and Harold was paid an annual salary of \$2,400 plus \$3.00 per hour on all hours over 800 for the year.

At the annual meeting January 1971, it was noted that toll revenue had jumped to \$3,500 for the previous year.

In April 1972, new ANI equipment was installed.

In 1977 rural cable was buried and customers had private line service.

Dan Lundt was hired as manager-repairman in December 1975. His salary was \$75.00 per month plus \$4.00 per hour.

In June 1977 Joyce Trotter was hired as secretary for \$150.00 per month. Also at the same time, a used Leich 100 line switch was purchased from Hospers, Iowa. Gene Merfield, installer and L.J. Suhr and Leo Reith, directors, drove a truck to Hospers and boxed the switch and brought it

back to Oran.

In July 1977 a Morton building was purchased as office, switchroom and meeting room for the Board of Directors. The new building was constructed at the site of the house, in which operators from previous years had lived.

In April 1978 rates were increased to: Residence private line, \$7.50; Business private line, \$9.00; Two-party business, \$8.00 and all extensions \$1.25. An open house was held in June, 1978.

In 1985 the directors meeting fee was raised from \$6.00 to \$10.00 per meeting.

During 1984 there was much discussion to determine if the telephone company should be sold. It was turned down at the stockholders meeting but the stockholders were given the option of selling their stock back to the telephone company for \$300.00 per share. Seven hundred eight of the sixteen hundred eight total shares elected to sell.

Herman Moeller and L.J. Suhr, long time directors at that time sold their stock and were replaced on the Board by Rick Trotter and Francis Youngblut.

1987 brought about some big changes when the company purchased a Stromberg-Carlson Digital Switch and joined Iowa Network Services. In September 1989 the company went equal access.

In 1986 the company became part owner of the Waterloo Metropolitan Statistical Area and in 1988 sold out its 5% of the cellular.

Also in 1988 the company joined with Telephone and Data Systems, Inc., Farmers Telephone Company at Jesup and Hawkeye Telephone Company and won the lottery draw for Rural Statistic Area 12, which in 1990 began offering cellular service.