

# Commonwealth

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time," she said.  
The operator would also have to time the calls herself with the aid of a "calculagraph." Resembling a time clock at the workplace, the operator would punch the time on a ticket and place the ticket by the particular cord. "We had to keep going in on the call in order to know if they were off or not," said Hutchenson. Think how annoyed some of us get when someone picks up the phone more than once while we're on it.

Commonwealth was conceived in Centermoreland when Bert Stroh strung a grounded telephone circuit between his home and a neighbor's. The company started only 21 years after Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone.

For Hutchenson, the technological strides she has seen since 1938 have been exhilarating. "I would never stand in the way of progress," she said. A few advances particularly stick out for her. The fact that the customer can dial their own calls, the fact that Commonwealth was the first to have fiber optics between Wellsboro and Mansfield and its ability to continually forge forward to help the customer.

Hutchenson said she always enjoyed her career there, which ended with her working as the corporate communications manager. "The day I retired I still enjoyed going to work. To me, it's one of the best companies you could work for with the best people."

Bob Sherwood and Jerry Kavanaugh, who have 58 years with the company between them, share Hutchenson's enthusiasm. Sherwood started out doing installation and ended his career in a management position. "It's grown by leaps and bounds. The new technology is unbelievable," he said. "Every time you turn around something new is out."

Sherwood watched as phone lines grew from two and four wires that could carry eight conversations, to cables, to copper wires that could transmit 24 conversations and finally fiber optics that carry 672 conversations over just two fibers. "It was fascinating as far as being a challenge," he said. But, with all these changes came a lot of training. "You didn't go into it cold. There was always training," said Sherwood, who worked at the old central office at the Red Rock Air Force Base. "You might be on the road for five weeks at school." He has traveled as far as California for training courses.

Sherwood started at the company in 1952 and retired eight years ago. He has fond memories of his 37 years there. "It was always a pleasure to work there. I always enjoyed my day," he said. "The experiences were unbelievable starting from day one. Everywhere you go you had a new experience." He said he was shocked to hear about Commonwealth's centennial.

Kavanaugh of Dallas, who started in 1976, retired three years

*"Today there might be a phone in every room. But, back then there might be one phone on a street."*

**Betty Hutchenson**  
Started in 1938

ago. He remembers the company's switch to fiber optics as a defining moment in Commonwealth's history. He mentions that Commonwealth even had a commercial spot during the 1979 Super Bowl, though he can't remember who played.

"I'm very impressed with the new technology. I can't imagine we're moving that quickly," said Kavanaugh, who remembers when it took four or five people to maintain one switch. Since the system has gone digital, it only takes one.

"I did enjoy my 21 years there. Although, I'm really enjoying my retirement too," said Kavanaugh, with a snicker. "I do miss the people. They are a great bunch."



Employees of Commonwealth Telephone enjoyed an outing in Centermoreland in 1912. The company was formed in 1897 in

Centermoreland when Bert Stroh strung a wire between his home and that of a neighbor.

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*"The day I retired I still enjoyed going to work."*

**Bob Sherwood**  
37-year employee

## SENIOR MENUS

Senior Citizen Centers sponsored by the Luzerne/Wyoming Counties Bureau for the Aging offer hot noon meals Monday through Friday to people 60 years of age or older. Donations from participants are gratefully accepted and needed in order to expand this program.

The following menu is for the week of June 20. All meals include margarine, milk and coffee.

**MONDAY** - Beef Stroganoff over noodles, hot spiced apples, peas/carrots, grapefruit juice, dinner roll, vanilla wafers.

**TUESDAY** - Sausage and peppers, oven brown potatoes, seasoned spinach, cranberry juice, rye bread, chocolate pudding.

**WEDNESDAY** - Italian Day. Chicken scampi, parslid rice, Roman vegetable medley, tomato juice, Italian bread, chilled peaches.

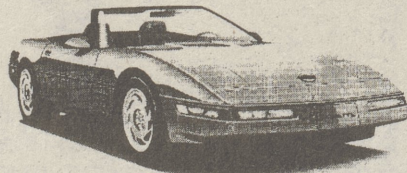
**THURSDAY** - Baked ham casserole, cherry cobbler, vegetable medley, orange juice, whole wheat bread, vanilla ice cream.

**FRIDAY** - Ham salad, whole wheat roll, carrot/raisin salad, macaroni salad, citrus sections, turkey noodle soup.

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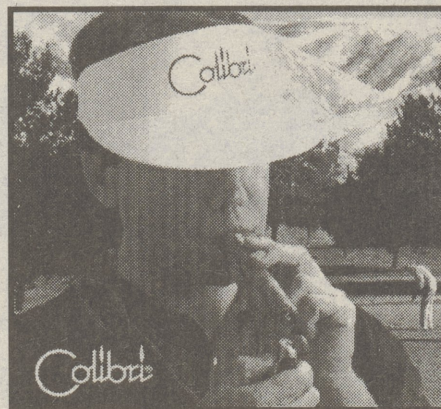
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