

**Jackson**

(continued from page 1)  
the company of mining outside the designated zone. The case began in January.

Chairperson Walter Glogowski explained that the township solicitor, Blythe Evans, advised the supervisors not to release the information. But Glogowski and the other supervisors do not agree with Evans' recommendation. "We will supply you with what you want to know because it is a matter of public record, but we will not turn them over," Glogowski said. Banks will be allowed to review the bills, but will not be allowed to make copies.

Fred Murray, a township resident, asked the supervisors how much they had paid solicitor Evans in the American Asphalt case. Glogowski gave Murray a year to date cost of \$17,000, but noted that this included other services, not just the court case. Murray expressed concern that his "tax dollars" were being used to pay the court costs. "If the supervisors in the township had done their job, we wouldn't be in the middle of this court case," Murray said.

In other news, the supervisors were notified that Proctor and Gamble intends to do logging in Plymouth Township and will be using a route that will go through Jackson Township. The paper products manufacturer will haul approximately 50 loads of logs over Mizdale Road between the end of August and the end of September.

Mizdale Road is currently in the process of being resurfaced. "Drainage work has already begun," supervisor John Wilkes Jr. said. Glogowski recommended the township contact Proctor and Gamble to ask them to use an alternate route. "Once we lay that new macadam down we don't want to see it destroyed in the first month," Glogowski said.

Also during the meeting, the supervisors voted unanimously to appoint secretary Henry Zbiek designated agent for Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) grants. This will mean Zbiek will have authorization to complete FEMA records and reports.

Glogowski announced that the next Back Mountain Communications Center meeting will be held on August 12 at the Kingston Township Municipal Building. The meeting is being held to address 911 concerns. Glogowski invited concerned citizens to attend the meeting.

# Lifelong link to Commonwealth for Besteders

By KYLIE SHAFFERKOETTER  
Post Staff

**CENTERMORELAND** - Sitting in their living room which once served as the first main office of the Commonwealth Telephone Company (CTCO), Karl and Helen Besteder recall a time before voice mail, digital menus and electronic operators.

The Besteders managed the Centermoreland Exchange in downtown Centermoreland from 1946 until 1951, when the exchange became automated. They have lived in the same building since that time. The Besteders were good at what they did because they had good teachers, Karl's parents.

Walter and Ruby Besteder began managing the exchange in about 1920. They stayed there until 1944 when someone else ran it for two years before their son and daughter-in-law took it over. They elder Besteders made 18 cents an hour and were an integral part of the community.

"My father would take messages for people. Someone like the veterinarian in town would call him and say, 'Walter, I'm going to be out for about three hours, so let everyone know,'" recalled Mr. Besteder, 80.

"If someone went out of town, they would tell Ruby to let people know they weren't home," added Mrs. Besteder. Mr. Besteder's father would often walk to neighbors' homes and hand deliver messages to them. Also, people could get an early morning wake-up call from Walter and Ruby. "That's the kind of people they were," said Mrs. Besteder, of her in-laws.

The Besteders worked for the original owners of CTCO, Bert Strohl and William Gay before the company was bought by Andrew J. Sordani in the 1930's, said Mr. Besteder.

By 1946, Walter and Ruby were running the post office when their son and his wife moved their young family into the CTCO building and carried on a family legacy. After Walter's death, Ruby ran the post office until her retirement.

The office/house has 13 rooms and the Besteders converted part of the downstairs into a living area, while the exchange was upstairs. Since then the entire

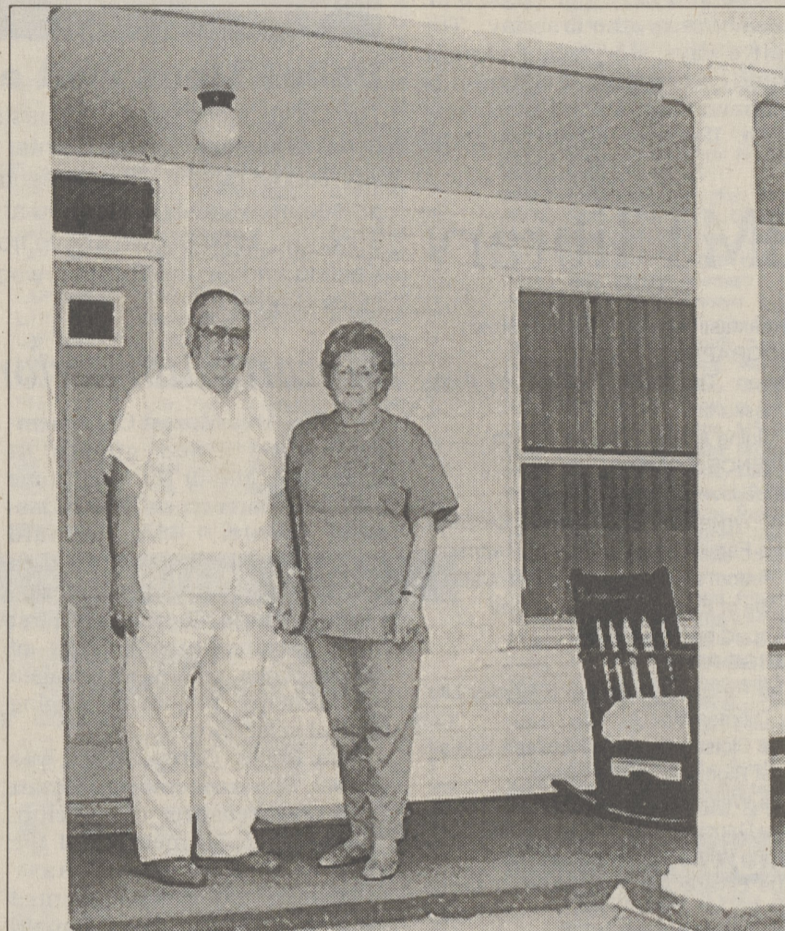


This photo shows the present Besteder home, right center, as it appeared when it was the office for Commonwealth Telephone. Most of the employees are identified. From left, Clarence Gay, Clarence Boston, unidentified, Walter Sickler, Ira Walters, Olin

Rogers, Hiram Kelly, Lorenzo Myers, William Kelly, Maude Heitsman, unidentified, Gladys Shook, unidentified, Anna Besteder, unidentified, Anna Transue, Alice Schoonover, unidentified, Ruth Weber.

*"Sometimes you would just sleep right there on the couch next to the exchange and jump up when someone called."*

**Helen Besteder**  
Former Commonwealth operator



Karl and Helen Besteder stand on the porch of their home that is also the original Commonwealth Telephone Company main office in Centermoreland. The company is celebrating its centennial this year.

stories of inevitable eavesdroppers. Hardly anyone had their

own phone line, they had party lines that had as many as 14

people on a line. All anyone had to do to hear someone else's conversation was pick up their phone, he said.

"You could always tell if someone was on the line," said Mr. Besteder. "There was 'The Breather' and 'The Person With the Big Clock.' That's how everyone knew each other's business."

Also, there was the occasional drunk who would try to make a date with one of the operators. They did not know the operators were mostly older ladies, said Mr. Besteder, with a smile.

In 1951, a lot of changes took place. While Mrs. Besteder was having her second child, the company moved the exchange downstairs at her request. The exchange became fully automated after the move, and did not require manual connecting. Although the Besteders were out of a job, they kept the building.

"They decided to sell it, so I bought it in 1951," said Mr. Besteder. The couple did not charge the company rent for the first couple of years. "Then we charged \$12 the first year and \$25 the next and they moved out," said Mrs. Besteder.

There are few remnants of the company in the Besteders' home. An old power board remains from the automated system, but now the house is full of pictures of grandchildren and cozy, made-up bedrooms for their family and guests.

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