

**Bartlesville Telemovie Experiment Collection
CC10**

The Barco Library Archives

The Cable Center
2000 Buchtel Boulevard
Denver, CO 80210
Ph: 303.871.4681
Fx: 303.871.4514

Shehla Khawaja, Special Collections Curator
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Biographical Sketch

Bartlesville, a wealthy oil community located in the Osage Hills of Oklahoma, was the test site for the first experiment in Pay Television. The rising popularity of television was causing a decline in attendance at the local movie theaters. Henry S. Griffing, President of Video Independent Theatres, Inc. and owner of the Bartlesville theatres attempted to keep his business by bringing movies into people's homes. Bartlesville was thought to be a prime area for this test or experiment because all of the theatres shared one owner.

The goal of this experiment was to bring Hollywood productions to people's homes via Cable Television. Both Jerrold Electronics and General Precision Laboratories provided the necessary technology that was to send the signal, receive the signal, and view it on a television. Milton J. Shapp, president of Jerrold Electronics, played a significant role in obtaining cooperation from the motion picture industry.

The Bartlesville Telemovie System (VIT's trade name) debuted with "The Pajama Game" starring Doris Day and played to an audience of 300 homes. The headline of the September 4, 1957 issue of *Variety* read "First-Run Films Now at Home" and the issue contains articles and interviews for and against the Bartlesville Experiment. One quote said, "...a historic new alliance was formed, linking electronics and the film business and molding the outline of a brand distribution system...". Bartlesville subscribers paid \$9.50 per month for a package of 26 features - 13 first run pictures on one channel and 13 re-runs on a second channel. They cut the monthly fee to \$4.95 and changed first runs and reruns to a single feature picture on one channel with a Muzak-type music program on the other channel. The system was also used to provide CATV service of the three Tulsa stations. Shortly before it ended, the experiment had 800 subscribers. The experiment, well-ahead of it's time, lasted eight months and set an example for how cable television could bring more entertainment than just off-air broadcast signals. It was another ten years before the concept of delivering motion pictures to homes on a pay basis became popular.

Provenance

The Bartlesville Telemovie Experiment Collection was created by different donations. In 1989 William A. Lasky donated photos of the Bartlesville Telemovie Experiment to The National Cable Television Center and Museum. The rest of the material, consisting almost entirely of photocopies, was assembled from various sources to tell the Bartlesville story.

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains several clippings, one report, and three personal recollections relating to the history of the experiment. There are also 39 8 x 10 inch, black and white photos documenting the city of Bartlesville in 1957, the advertising and promotional campaign, the installation and operation of the studio equipment, and the related infrastructure to deliver signals to subscribers. The photos have been digitized and are available on the web at archives.cablecenter.org.

Related Collections

The oral histories of E. Stratford Smith and Zalmon Garfield are available in their entirety at the Barco Library and on our website as part of the Hauser Oral and Video History Collection, <http://www.cablecenter.org/education/library/oralHistories.cfm>.

Container list

Box 1:

ff1: Milton J. Shapp, "A History and Current Report of the Bartlesville Telemovie Cable Theatre Project," from *Proceedings, Fourth Annual Western Regional Conference, National Community Television Association, Incorporated*, Los Angeles, September 1957, p. 16-35

ff2: Clippings from NCTA *Bulletin*, March, September 1957

ff3: Clippings from trade magazines, October 1956 – February 1958, all photocopies

"Cable Pay-TV Project to Start in Oklahoma" *Broadcasting*, Oct. 22, 1956, p. 9

"Giant Theater (Television)," *Time*, 69:9, March 4, 1957, p. 67. [printout]

"Bartlesville's Cable Cinema," *Variety*, Sept. 4, 1957

Ralph L. Smith, "Coming to Grips with Pay-TV: See Bartlesville Home – TV Winning Adherents, But Circulation a Secret," *Variety*, Sept. 11, 1957, p. 5, 22.

Fred Hift, "Coming to Grips with Pay-TV: Industry Eyes Complex Facts," *Variety*, Sept. 11, 1957, p. 5, 22.

"Pros and Cons of Telemovies" *Variety*, Sept. 11, 1957, p. 1, 22.

"Cable Pay TV Captures Full Spotlight," *Television Digest*, Aug. 31, 1957, 2.

"Subscription TV – After Bartlesville, What?" *Television Digest*, Sept. 7, 1957, p. 1-3.

"Bartlesville 'Telemovie' closed-circuit TV project entered second week..." *Television Digest*, Sept. 14, 1957, p. 9

"Pay-As-You-See Premiere." *Time*, 70:12, Sept. 16, 1957, p. 106.

"Par [Paramount] Unbends on Bartlesville-TV; Talk Terms Later," *Variety*, Sept. 18, 1957, p. 3, 15.

"First Month of Telemovies Satisfactory to Video: 500 Subscribers Reported by Griffing," *Boxoffice*, Oct. 26, 1957, p. 13.

"Langer's Bartlesville Survey Tossed into Toll TV Rhubarb," *Broadcasting*, Nov. 4, 1957, p. 60. [US Sen. William Langer, R-N.D.]

"Toll Isn't the Word For It," *Broadcasting*, Nov. 4, 1957, p. 60.

"What's the Bartlesville Pulse?" *Broadcasting*, Nov. 4, 1957, p. 62.

"Celler Again Warns FCC Against Authorizing Pay TV," *Broadcasting*, Nov. 4, 1957, p. 68. [US Rep. Emanuel Celler, D-N.Y.]

"Telemovies Sustains Big December Losses" *Broadcasting*, Feb. 10, 1958, p. 33.

ff4: Excerpts from The Cable Center's Hauser Oral and Video History Collection relating to Bartlesville; E. Stratford Smith (1986) and Zalmon H. Garfield (1989)

ff5: Edward J. Manzo to Arthur E. Hungerford, Jr., April 15, 1991
typescript photocopy of letter discussing Bartlesville experiment

ff6: Bartlesville photos, subscriber, BV00001-BV00002

BV00001: "A subscriber watching the picture 'The Pajama Game' on first day of operation." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00002: "Family winning first subscriber contest and principal prize." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

ff7: Bartlesville photos, studio, BV00003-BV00014

BV00003: "Telemovie studio – Converted Lyric Theatre – B House" 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00004: "Overall shot of Studio as now operating." 8 x 10 inch b&w print, 4 x 5 inch negative

BV00005: Dual channel GPL projectors with slide projector equipment, normal and stand-by vidicon cameras, and 3-2 ratio projection heads." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00006: "The studio auditorium as set up by Jerrold Electronics Co. and Hallamore to explain the visiting interested parties the network installation and

economical studio equipment. Attended and explained by representatives from the separate companies." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00007: "H. S. Griffing starting operation of telemovies on September 3, 1957." [Henry S. Griffing] 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00008: "Panels of video amplification, distribution amplification, power supply, and sync generators fro Channels 3 and 5." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00009: "Lobby of 1,00 seat Osage, principal theatre of Bartlesville." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00010: "Muzak Tape reproducer." 8 x 10 inch b&w print, 4 x 5 inch negative

BV00011: "Display of television gifts given by Motorola Company to winner of contest on first subscriber promotion." 8 x 10 inch b&w print, 4 x 5 inch negative

BV00012: "Hallamore display showing one channel, one man operator possibility. Completely self-contained and available with 35 mm projector heads." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00013: "Jerrold Modulators and Gates Sound Limiters." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00014: "Anamorphic Correction panel that makes it possible to project Cinemascope, VistaVision, and regular film with true characteristics." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

ff8: Bartlesville photos, wiring, BV00015-BV00024

BV00015: "Appearance of installed strand and JT-201 double-shielded Coaxial Cable on pole with line extender amplifier mounted." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00016: "Three channel Control Console." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00017: "Close-up of signal isolation switch which permits intermingling of TM [Telemovie] and TV signals." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00018: "Installed strand and JT-201 double-shielded Coaxial Cable leading from studio." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00019: "Method of entering home at base-board level. In this case entry followed previously installed antenna lead." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00020: "Process of wiring TM [Telemovie] circuit to back of patron's set. Mechanic is affixing signal isolation switch." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00021: "UBC-26 Line Amplifier with MOA-4 distribution amplifier." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00022: "Process of routing cable at home to enter house at patron's choosing." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00023: "TV aerial necessary for satisfactory television reception from Tulsa, approximately 50 miles distant. Reception satisfactory – 91% of homes have TV." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00024: "UBC-26 Line Amplifier with MDA-4 distribution amplifier as mounted on pole." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

ff9: Bartlesville photos, city of Bartlesville, BV00025-BV00032

BV00025: "Bannered transport arrival of studio equipment properly escorted to the studio by police." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00026: "Early teaser advertising used." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00027: "Bartlesville – First Telemovie City – Population 28,000 – Industry, Oil and Cattle – Approximately 7,000 homes – 6370 sets." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00028: "Main street of Bartlesville – To left of center is 1000 seat Osage Theatre, principal theatre in town." 8 x 10 inch b&w print, 4 x 5 inch negative

BV00029: "Bartlesville residential area." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00030: "Corner of main business intersection showing 800 seat Arrow Theatre. Street banner maintained for 30 days. See advertising brochure for balance of advertising." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00031: "Bartlesville from the air." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00032: "Mayor Hensley's cooperation is indicative of city-wide support by various civic clubs." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

ff10: Bartlesville photos, programming, BV00033-BV00039

BV00033: "Title strip of the Cinemascope 'Istanbul' as reproduced by the Anamorphic Correction panel." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00034: "Title of the VistaVision picture 'The Searchers' as reproduced by the Anamorphic Correction Panel." 8 x 10 inch b&w print, 4 x 5 inch negative

BV00035: "VistaVision header from 'The Searchers' as reproduced by the Anamorphic Correction Panel." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00036: "Title of the conventional ratio picture 'Joe Dakota' as reproduced by the studio equipment." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00037: "A scene from the conventional ratio picture 'Joe Dakota' as reproduced by the studio equipment." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00038: "Cinemascope header from the picture 'Istanbul' as reproduced by the Anamorphic Correction Panel." 8 x 10 inch b&w print

BV00039: "A scene from the picture 'The Searchers' as reproduced by the Anamorphic Correction Panel." 8 x 10 inch b&w print