

July 24, 2000

To:

Last

- Marilyn Showalter
- Dick Hemstad
- Bill Gillis
- Rick Mattoon
- Dixie Linnenbrink
- Glenn Blackmon
- (Please Circulate)

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*Return to
Marilyn - MS*

*Pls. file in
UT-991737
Rosenberg*

From:

Bob Shirley



RE:

Trip to Chelan, Okanogan, Douglas and Grant Counties; Attached Card

Tani Thurston of consumer Affairs and I traveled to Chelan, Okanogan, Douglas and Grant counties for two days last week to meet with people in various stages of obtaining telephone service. We met with the Brady's and one of their neighbors in the area in Chelan County that GTE has agreed to serve. In Okanogan county, we traveled to Mt. Hull and participated in a community meeting attended by approximately 60 people. In Douglas and Grant counties we toured the Moses Coulee area where there is no telephone exchange and 10 - 12 households and farms are without telephone service. We drove over 1,000 miles.

In Chelan, we were able to check and see that things are going according to schedule where GTE has agreed to provide service by October. According to the Brady's, GTE engineers have been out twice and the local residents are pleased with the progress to date. We aided one resident who had been having difficulty placing an order with GTE; we prevailed upon GTE to accept the order while the discrepancy with the persons reported address and the county emergency services designation of the address are resolved.

In Okanogan, we participated in a community meeting on Mt. Hull where M&L Enterprises will begin construction later this summer to serve approximately 200 households. The president of M&L attended and spoke and answered question for about an hour and a half. Tani and I pitched in with information as needed to answer the questions of the approximately 60 people who attended.

Moses Coulee is located in Douglass and Grant counties and runs from U.S. 2 south about 12 miles in the direction of Ephrata. It is a fairly narrow coulee with a county road running through from north to south. We met with three residents of the area who do not have telephone service or who have it via radio telephone connections that prove problematic in a variety of weather conditions and when power is out. They have asked to be placed into a telephone exchange so they can request line extensions. Altogether, there are three working farms, two other businesses (Rimrock Meadows and a B&B), and five or six residences along the approximate 12 miles of county road that traverses the area that is not in a telephone exchange. GTE serves northwest and northeast of the coulee and Qwest serves south of the area. Staff expects to pursue their request.

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More on 991737 on next page

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9/17/37

Attached is a card I received from one of the families on Mt. Hull. While addressed to me, it is really more appropriately shared with the entire agency. The picture is three generations of the Owens family that live at the top of Mt. Hull. It was Maranatha Owens' call last July that brought to our attention there are approximately 200 households on Mt. Hull without telephone service. In the Owen's case, they live about 200 yards from a neighbor with telephone service; the neighbor is in GTE territory and the Owens' live in the Qwest Oroville exchange. It is in this area that M&L enterprises has agreed to create a new telephone service.

There is more to the story. When Maranatha contacted the Commission, she was several months pregnant and qualified for the Washington Telephone Assistance Program (WTAP). Without a wireline, however, there was no way for her to take advantage of the discounted service supported by WTAP. She felt she needed a telephone because she had some difficulties in the pregnancy. Ultimately, she purchased the least cost cell service, even though she could not depend on obtaining dial tone and had to move to various parts of the house and yard to obtain a connection. This prompted my request to WTAP last September to consider supporting wireless telephone service in circumstances where no wireline service is available to an eligible customer.

WTAP initially said they would not support wireless service. The program managers were concerned about the high-cost of wireless coverage. Since that initial rejection, WTAP has reconsidered its position and is now revising its rules to permit support of the lowest priced wireless service (usually 60 minutes for \$19.95) when wireline service is not available.

cc: Tani Thurston
Vicki Elliott
Jonathan Thompson
Shannon Smith

Dear Bob,

- Sending you our sincerest
appreciation...

Thanks + hats off to
you, your colleagues, and all
others who worked to bring
phone service to Mt. Hull!

It has been a great joy
to have an advocate of such
caliber. You are always
welcome here.

Truly,
Jonathan, Marantha, + Hosanna Courage Owens

