

Opinion

Telephone breakup anniversary

It's been a year since the telephone company was split up, and here's what that means to you. A great deal of consumer discontent, accompanied by the creation of a booming new telephone-equipment industry; poorer service, unregulated by all the fancy new equipment available; slightly lower long-distance rates, but higher local rates that more than make up for the difference for most phone users.

After one year, there's still nearly universal telephone service in the country, but the trend is away from that, with basic-service charge rising. And the Federal Communications Commission just added to the increasing cost by deciding to tack a \$1 per month access charge onto all telephone bills starting next June and a \$2 charge the year after.

There's probably no one to blame for the mess. Probably it would have occurred eventually in any case. Once the decision was made to allow AT&T to compete in the development of high-tech communications — and how long would it have made sense to allow AT&T or its competitors out of this field? — all the rest followed.

When AT&T was to compete fairly, it couldn't be allowed to hold on to its well-monopolized profits from basic telephone service. To do so would have put potential competitor costs far above its own, and no one would have wanted to do that.

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have been no way around things like the new access charge. Given the technology and the competitive market that now exists, the biggest long-distance users and providers are capable of simply bypassing local telephone networks. And wherever it is cheaper per call for them to build their own systems than to pay the local networks for use of local telephone lines, they will. Once they do, the cost of local service will have to go up, to cover the full expense of maintaining local lines. The only way to prevent or forestall that is to keep the price of long-distance calls below the level at which bypass systems make sense — which means raising the basic charge of maintaining local lines. One way or the other, local customers would eventually have to pay a greater access charge for maintaining local lines.

Confusion was similarly unavoidable. As soon as there was competition, it was inevitable there would be rivalry in both products and services. As soon as there were competitors, choosing among them and coordinating between them was bound to get complicated.

The benefit the general public is eventually supposed to gain from all this is considerable: The new competition is supposed to bring lower costs, faster innovations, improved economic growth and greater efficiency in the long run. But if there are — one year into the process — no signs that that's what's happening, there's also precious little to be done about it. Other than lobbying for smoother transition rules and for special programs to help poor people as telephone costs rise, one can only wait and hope that it will all turn out to be worth it.

Mama! What's he doing with the hose?

Saturday afternoon we were well aware that water has a habit of freezing at 32 degrees, but anything after the storm was a try, and what with Joyce Kilmer's "Trees" floating through my mind, "I think that I shall never see a poem so lovely as a tree," which always has been a good quote, but is the best that I can do.

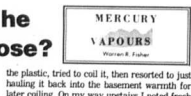
The fool man stood with garden hose in hand and shot water as high as the 50-year-old water pipes would allow. First without the nozzle, then after putting on an extra length of hose and fiddling said nozzle. I used two-hour's work of water.

If you are still puzzled, we were hoping to see your "little" magnolia tree. (Elsewhere either with this article or on the next page are pictures.)

The little tree, not a native to the Kentucky climate, much less the winters of this and past years, started as a mere thing on the Elm Street side of the house. For three years it just took up space, practically dormant, not paying a bit of attention to TLC or fertilizer. Then my better half gave it a talking to — telling it to either get with it or we'd chop it down.

One of the pictures shows the little squirt back in the '70s during its first icing. I know there have been other pictures over the years, but the site that greeted me Friday evening and Saturday morning was a pitiful one.

When I had done all the leaves and limbs that I could reach with the hose, I gathered up



MERCURY LAPOURS

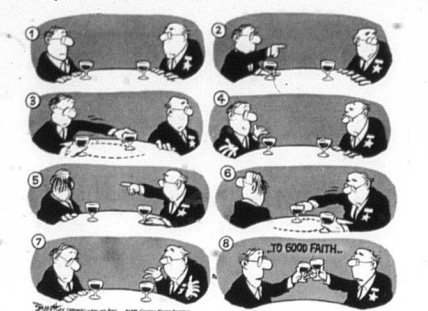
the plastic, tried to call it, and resorted to just hauling it back into the basement warrens for later cooling. On my way outside I noted frost draining from the outside down past the furnace to the stump pump. Yes, I did use quite a bit of water. And that not being sufficient, found that I had water-logged my watch. But that's a job I won't attempt. I haven't gotten the first clock I took apart back together again.

We're a little behind with storm updating. We had two long distance calls this past weekend asking what had happened to "my Mercury".

The first from Bethel, inquired about W.C. Hammonds subscription which was paid according to our records Nov. 20, 1984 for another year and which had not been updated but the address was correct. The other, H.D. Barton, Flemingsburg, paid Nov. 6, 1984 and had not been updated, but as far as we could tell the address was the proper try.

I guess we'll have to go to computer labels on the whole ball of wax. We're now doing what they are to readers 1, 2, 3 and 4 with labels and they are much better and easier to read.

Toasting out of the year the newspaper, since these resolutions brought about by any New Year's resolutions but by



TO GOOD FAITH

Agree or not Leadership election to dominate legislature's present session

The Governor's Committee has announced its plan to hold a leadership election to dominate the legislature's present session. The committee, led by Governor James Ray, is expected to announce its candidates in the next few weeks.

The committee's plan is to hold a leadership election in the next few weeks. The candidates will be elected by the legislature, and will serve for the remainder of the session. This is a significant move, as it will allow the committee to have a direct say in the leadership of the legislature.

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Down Memory Lane Chaplin Alexander reported MIA

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Op-Ed page The Spanish Inquisition lives... but now they operate it on a shoe string

For the want of a nail — a kingdom is lost. You, and the rest of a shivering city, are in a bad way. You are to be the establishment in the finest fashion and you will be... I am not here to give you a pat on the back. I am here to give you a pat on the back.

My apartment is so small, you can have breakfast in bed without getting up. My place is small, the floor is in flight patterns. I am not here to give you a pat on the back. I am here to give you a pat on the back.

I looked out the window and saw a number of... I looked out the window and saw a number of... I looked out the window and saw a number of...

Russ Metz

You would think in the American world of high tech, a... You would think in the American world of high tech, a... You would think in the American world of high tech, a...

Some of the names were not on county road maps, but... Some of the names were not on county road maps, but... Some of the names were not on county road maps, but...

The big news is that... The big news is that... The big news is that...

The thought, if you haven't had a use for it by now, you probably never will. Gradually I'm creating more space to accumulate more junk, but in the process I

Mama! What's with the hose?

That's just the way these jeans fit. I looked for a hole a floppy disk. "That's just the way these jeans fit."

Trees take beating in ice storm, snow



The better-hill called me Friday evening about 4:30 saying bring your camera if you want several snow pictures. I wasn't prepared but I went. I got a view of a magnolia. Most of its top branches had been sheared by the weight of the ice and snow.

Ice and snow

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Looking in a southerly direction, the same tree.

From above

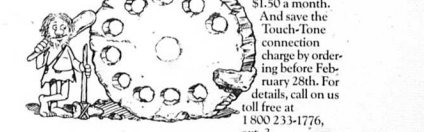
Looking down Saturday morning on a once proud tree to see me in a melancholic mood for the day.

Looking in a southerly direction, the same tree.

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Letters

From our readers. Something on your mind? Write a letter to the Mercury. We will print it if we have space.

Dear Mr. Editor: I am writing to you regarding the... I am writing to you regarding the... I am writing to you regarding the...