

# Thelma Hess oral history interview

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Oral History Interview with Thelma Hess

Transcript of Oral History Interview of Thelma Hess  
Interviewed by Kathy Bradford on June 13, 2005  
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Acc # 05.29.1 / MS 295

Kathy Bradford: Today is June 13, 2005, and I'm speaking with Thelma Hess at her home in Provo, Utah. Thelma, I'd like you to tell me first where and when you were born and a little bit about your family and your growing-up years.

Thelma Hess: I was born in Grand Junction, Colorado, April 11, 1912. My grandparents grew up in Iowa, but Mother's health failed, so that's why they went to Grand Junction and were there when I was born. My dad worked on the railroad, and finally we ended up in Englewood, Colorado. We lost my brother at this point, and dad was part-time on the railroad. At the telephone switchboard in Englewood - my father saw Mr. Abbot, the manager who said, "I have to put in another position, and I'll have to hire another operator."

My dad said, "Oh, do you think my daughter could be one of them?"

KB: How old were you?

TH: I was 14 in March but would be 15 in April, and Dad told him that. He said, "Well, let her to come and try."

For 9 years and 8 months, I worked at this Englewood Telephone Exchange for Mountain States Telephone & Telegraph Company.

KB: Was that when you said, "Number please?"

TH: Yes, ma'am, and took all the calls, called the firemen and doctors - you know, just wonderful work. I loved it.

In 1935, Walter S. Gifford, President of the Mountain States Telephone Company, placed the first call overseas, and I was part of that because he was in Denver. Here it starts out that the conversation was going to North America, Asia, Europe and spanned the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. When he finished talking about that, Pres. Gifford said, "I wonder what time it is in Java."

"I don't remember," Mr. Miller replied. "I have..."

"It is 10 o'clock in Java now," came the voice of a stranger.

On the other side of the world, the engineers in the control room in Java had heard this come across.

He said, "Are there any others on this line that I can talk to?"

**IDENTIFIER**

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