Talking Book Repair Group

History in Columbia, SC
Fifty Years of Service
1960-2010
Talking Book Repair Group

History in Columbia, SC

Fifty Years of Service
1960-2010

Book Compiled by:
Richard S. Morris, III
This book is dedicated in loving memory
to my father
Richard S. Morris, Jr.
born June 14, 1902
died January 27, 1994
## Contents

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Preface

I have attempted to combine as much history of the Talking Book Repair Group that I have been able to locate. My father first organized the group in 1960, when the Library of Congress requested that such a group be formed. This was the first group of many dedicated volunteers who have continued this service for fifty years and have moved their repair shop four times. Their volunteer service has saved the community over one million, three hundred thousand dollars. Over the years, eighteen members have passed away. The group has developed an unusual comradery that continues to this day.

I would like to express my appreciation to the library staff members and everyone in the repair shop who have assisted me in gathering the information, pictures, and documents in this book.

I would appreciate receiving any corrections or additions to this book.

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History of the Talking Book Repair Organization  
In Columbia, South Carolina

In 1878, Thomas Edison predicted that one day his most popular invention, the phonograph, might be used to play books for the blind. His dream became reality in 1934, when the Library of Congress began distributing talking books to the blind. Specially designed phonographs, called talking-book machines, played the recorded books at 33-1/3 r.p.m., although most home phonographs were still revolving at 78 r.p.m. The machines and the records were developed at the American Foundation for the Blind, in New York, which sold the machines at cost to blind readers. The records were produced by the Library’s Division for the Blind and distributed free of charge through regional libraries. President Roosevelt, in 1935, authorized the Works Progress Administration to produce the machines for free loan to the blind, and in 1946 the Library of Congress received an appropriation to produce the machines on a contractual basis.

By this time there were numerous models of machines in use. Different amplifiers and pickup cartridges used in each model created repair complications because the sources of parts were so varied. A standardized machine with universally available parts was introduced in 1957, but older machines were still in use and needed to be maintained. As the number of machines and readers increased, so did the problems of machine service and repair. Although machines were distributed to new readers through regional agencies across the country, broken or malfunctioning machines had to be shipped to a central repair station. Readers were deprived of their machines for months at a time, and the Library, plagued by the minor repairs essential to keeping the current machines running, was unable to expand its services to the blind.

To alleviate this situation the Library in 1958 decentralized the repair program. Major repairs were still to be made at a central point, but minor ones, such as replacement of fuses, defective tubes, and other parts, were to be handled by the distributing agencies. Unfortunately, personnel in the lending agencies lacked the technical knowledge to make the system workable. Forced to look elsewhere for a solution the Library turned to a community service arm of industry.

In the Telephone Pioneers of America, active and retired telephone industry employees with 21 years of service in communications join together for community work and fellowship. Although the Pioneers had been transcribing textbooks into Braille since 1955 as one of their many volunteer projects, it was not until 1960 that they learned of the Library’s dilemma and the medium really became the message. Why not let the Pioneers with their technical and electronic skill take over the service repairs of talking-book machines by working through the agencies? The proposal seemed worth a try, and in the spring of 1960, pilot studies were undertaken in two agencies, one in a metropolitan area, and the other in a rural community.

Under the pilot program, the Pioneers would make major repairs of machines and train agency personnel to make minor repairs. By September 1960, both regional agencies declared
the study an unqualified success, and the Library requested extension of the service to other areas.

At this time, the Library of Congress requested the National Pioneer Office to assist with the repair of talking books in all states, and programs were set up in most states. Al Spears was President of the South Carolina Pioneer Chapter and requested Richard Morris, Jr. to be chairman of a committee to repair the talking books in South Carolina. At this time, the administration of the machines was handled by the National Federation of the Blind on Bull Street in Columbia, and the initial repair shop was established at this location. Test equipment and tools were provided by the workers or donated by the telephone company, and the Library of Congress provided the repair parts. The talking book machines during this time were record players with tube type amplifiers and hand wired circuits. They had bulky cases and played only one speed, 33-1/3 r. p. m. The names of the Pioneer members of the committee during this time are unknown, with the exception of Richard Morris, Jr. They worked in teams and tried to spend at least one night a month repairing machines. Because all were fully employed by the telephone company and worked during the day, they repaired books at night.

Several years later, in approximately 1963, the repair shop was moved to the telephone company work center on Laurens Street. There was more room at this location, and each worker constructed his own repair cubical. The Welfare Department delivered and picked up the machines, and the repaired machines were shipped back to the user. (The post office ships the repaired machines at no cost.) In 1965, the AE-1 talking book machines with three speed motors were put into service. They played speeds of 33-1/3, 16-2/3 and 8-1/3. During this time the group assumed the task of changing out the motors in all existing nine hundred machines in South Carolina to accommodate a new speed. The new 8-1/3 r. p. m. speed allowed the Library of Congress, which provides the records, to record about four hours on each record, whereas before they could record only 1-½ hours per record. During this time, members of the repair group were C. B. Andrews, W. W. Blythe, E. O. Bradshaw, G. M. Carney, M. A. Derrick, F. B. Ham, C. S. Hogan, and chairman Richard Morris, Jr.

In 1968, the new AE-5 machine was released. It was the first fully transistorized phonograph in the program. The old case was replaced by a new durable two-tone cycolac case. The hand wired circuitry was replaced by solid-state circuit boards. This caused some repair problems, thereby requiring training on the new machine and stocking parts for the old and new machines.

The Laurens Street work center was closed in 1969, and the repair group moved to the Truman Street work center. The group set up shop in the basement of the work center and moved the repair cubicles to this location. It was no longer necessary for the workers to work at night, since at this time all members of the team were retired.

In January 1971, the first cassette machines in two models were manufactured and distributed. These machines were similar in design to cassette machines on the commercial with additional features for the blind and physically handicapped. This created additional problems
for the repair shop, since the workers had to repair record players and cassette machines.

In 1973, the South Carolina State Library Department for the Blind and Handicapped was organized in Columbia. This department took over from the National Federation of the Blind the responsibility of distribution and repair for the talking book machines as well as the distribution of the records and tapes, and the Pioneers continued their repair work at the Truman Street work center. In 1981 the C-1 and the C-2 cassette machines were introduced. They were considered the standard cassette playback equipment.

On January 1, 1984, the divestiture of A T & T took place, forming the Baby Bells, and the Pioneers then became a part of the new operating company Bell South. After the break up, the Truman Street work center became the property of A T & T. Shortly after this, A T & T closed the work center, thereby requiring another move of the repair shop. At this time, there was ample room in many of the telephone central offices due to the replacement of old equipment with new electronic equipment. The telephone-building engineers provided a room in the Sunset Central office near the Trenholm Plaza in Forest Acres. This location was chosen because of the close proximity to the home of Richard Morris, Jr. The shop was moved to this location in 1988, and repair work was done there until 2003, when the repair group was requested to move to another location due to building security requirements. The repair group was offered several other locations at telephone work centers, but they were not satisfactory. Eventually, the South Carolina State Library Department for the Blind and Handicapped offered space in their building on Senate Street, which was an ideal location, since all talking books are shipped in and out of this building. On July 1, 2003, the repair shop moved to this location and remains there to this day. The last cassette machine was produced February 17, 2007. One and a half million machines have been produced since 1981. On August 1, 2009, the new Digital Talking-Book system was being shipped to local libraries. Cassette Book Machines will remain in circulation throughout the transition period until the Digital Talking Book Machines fully replace all Cassette Book Machines. To ensure ongoing availability of Cassette Book Machines through 2011, spare parts are being stocked. The spare parts purchased—mostly rubber parts and playback heads—will be used for routine repairs necessary to keep the Cassette Book Machines in working order. These parts are expected to last as long as the current life cycle of the C-1 player.

It now appears that the Cassette Book Machines are being replaced by the new Digital Book Machines faster than expected. The need for repair is drastically reduced as the Digital Book Machines come into service. The future requirements for the repair shop are uncertain at this time.
State Library
Location of the Talking Book repair shop
David S. Goble
Administration
Director
Became Director in March 2007
Pamela N. Davenport
Talking Book Services
Director
Became Director January 18, 2005
Naomi Bradey
Talking Book Services
Volunteer Coordinator
Became Volunteer Coordinator
October 18, 1988
Ron Whitten
Talking Book Services
Equipment Coordinator
Became Equipment Coordinator
in 1991
Current Member of the Repair Team

Ralph Baxter

Retired from A T & T
with 34 years of service
Started in the repair shop August 1993
Current Member of the Repair Team

Bill Blythe

Retired from Bell South
with 30 years of service
Started in the repair shop August 2007
Current Member of the Repair Team

George Entzminger

Retired from Southern Bell with 38 years service
Started in the repair shop May 1992
Elected working leader in 2007
Current Member of the Repair Team

Ted Floyd

Retired from Bell South with 32 years of service
Started in the repair shop June 1995
Current Member of the Repair Team

Frank Gunter

Retired from Bell South
with 45 years of service
Started in the repair shop April 2002
Current Member of the Repair Team

Martin Lowery

Retired from A T & T
with 43 years of service
Started in the repair shop February 1994
Current Member of the Repair Group

Richard Morris

Retired from Bell South
with 33 years of service
Started in the repair shop May 2007
Current Member of the Repair Group

Tom Murray

Retired from Bell South with 32 years of service
Started in the repair shop September 1982
Current Member of the Repair Group

E G Taylor

Retired from Bell South
with 32 years of service
Started in the repair shop November 2001
In Memorium

FORMER REPAIR SHOP MEMBERS WHO HAVE PASSED ON

P H Alexander July 10, 1996
C B Andrews August 31, 1996
W W Blythe June 18, 1999
George Carney June 4, 1993
Lawrence Davis January 2, 1990
M A Derrick August 21, 1987
Tom Fielder August 24, 1994
Robert Ginn August 12, 2009
James Gurley January 3, 1997
Dick Hawkins August 20, 2007
Curtis Hogan January 10, 2002
Tom McKeown September 16, 2001
Bill Miller April 14, 2002
Jimmy Moore October 24, 1993
Richard Morris, Jr. January 27, 1994
Hugh Oldham March 17, 1999
Eugene Smith July 7, 1993
Joe Spears July 24, 1997
### Talking-book and Cassette Machines repaired by years

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<tr>
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<th>Total Machines</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<td>134</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>1634</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>1981</td>
<td></td>
<td>157</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>679</td>
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<td>1982</td>
<td></td>
<td>168</td>
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<td>700</td>
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<td>561</td>
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<td>167</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>741</td>
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<td>1424</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1201</td>
<td>1680</td>
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**Total Repair Cost**

- $35589
- $37.90
- $1,348,823.10

This is the most accurate yearly list of repaired machines that I have been able to compile from the existing records.

Total savings: $1,348,823.10
Talking Book Repair Shop Locations in Columbia, South Carolina

1960 to 1963  National Federation of the Blind
              Bull Street

1963 to 1969  Southern Bell Work Center
              Laurens Street

1969 to 1988  Bell South Work Center
              Truman Street

1988 to 2003  A T & T Sunset Central Office
              Trenholm Road

2003 to Date  South Carolina State Library for the Blind
              1430 Senate Street
Special Recognition
With Talking Book Repair

Twenty Eight Years
of Service
5800 Machines Repaired
Saving $219,280
Recognized by his Co-workers

RS Moris, III
L.V. Taylor
George Entminger

Frank K. Denton
Bill Blythe
Ralph E. Beale
Newspaper Articles and Publications
Shown repairing “Talking Book” machines are, left to right, C. B. Andrews, R. S. Morris, chairman of the committee, and G. M. Carney. Members of the Committee try to devote one evening a month to the project.

The Columbia Council’s Committee to repair “Talking Book” machines will soon celebrate its 5th anniversary.

Started in March 1961, the Committee has repaired over 420 machines — nearly half of those in use in South Carolina.

“Talking Book” machines are record players for blind people. Records are available to these people that include the Bible, in full, other full-length books and magazines.

The Columbia Council undertook this project nearly five years ago and works closely with the South Carolina welfare Department. When a machine needs repairing, the Welfare Department gets the machine to the Pioneer workshop. When machines have been repaired, the Welfare Department arranges to have them picked up and shipped back to the user (the post office ships these at no cost).

Chairman of the project is R. S. Morris and members of his Committee are C. B. Andrews, W. W. Blythe, E. O. Bradshaw, G. M. Carney, M. A. Derrick, F. B. Hamm, and C. S. Hogan. Committee members work in teams and try to spend at least one night a month repairing machines.

The job is a big one and more help is always welcome. The job will be even bigger next year when the motors in all 900 South Carolina machines will have to be changed to accommodate a new speed. The new 8 1/3 r. p. m. will enable the Library of Congress, which provides the records, to get about four hours on each record whereas they now can get only 1 1/2 hours per record.

Article in the Palmetto Pioneer
December 1965

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The Columbia Council of the Telephone Pioneers of America was honored recently by the Library of Congress for its "contribution to the blind people of South Carolina." The local Pioneer group, along with 55 other Pioneer groups throughout the nation, was cited for its work in maintaining and repairing the specially-designed portable record players, called Talking Book machines, which the Library of Congress supplies free to blind persons. Accepting the certificate was R. S. Morris, second from right, who has headed the project for the Columbia Council since the beginning. The presentation was made by R. J. Clontz of Charlotte, regional vice president of The Telephone Pioneers of America. Also attending the presentation luncheon were Mrs. Minnie Lee, president of the Columbia Council, and J. E. Wright of Greenville, president of the state Pioneer Chapter. Both Clontz and Wright are former Columbians.

Article in The State Newspaper in Columbia, SC
November, 1966
The Columbia Council on behalf of the J. Epps Brown Chapter of the Telephone Pioneers of America was honored recently by the Library of Congress for its "contribution to the blind people of South Carolina." The Columbia Pioneer group, along with 55 other pioneer groups throughout the nation, was cited for its work in maintaining and repairing the specially-designed portable record players, called "Talking Book machines," which the Library of Congress supplies free to blind persons. Accepting the certificate was R. S. Morris, second from right, who has headed the project for the Columbia Council since the beginning. The presentation was made by R. J. Clontz of Charlotte, regional vice president of The Telephone Pioneers of America. Also attending the presentation luncheon were Mrs. Minnie Lee, president of the Columbia Council, and J. E. Wright of Greenville, president of the Pioneer Chapter.

This article appeared in the Palmetto Pioneer in November 1966
Talking Books Aid In Informing The Blind

By MARGARET DANA

If you have never heard of Talking Books, then this Christmas-gift season is the perfect time to learn about them.

They are not, as you might think, a new kind of toy for children. Instead they are one of the great inventions of civilization which cares about its handicapped citizens.

They are planned to bring the mainstream of life back into the days of those who have lost their sight—of whom there are estimated to be some 330,000 in this country today. Of these some 14,000 are children.

Blindness can be a lonely, tragic affair, or it can be just a handicap to overcome. With the Talking Books for the Blind we who can see can help bridge that handicap with new interests, entertainments, education and stimulation.

The oldest and perhaps best known nonprofit organization that has led the way for more than 100 years in producing books for the blind is the American Printing House for the Blind. Although a private business whose production is entirely for the blind, it is also the agency designated by Congress to supply the Library of Congress' Division for the Blind with the books it selects.

Originally the grant to the American Printing House for the Blind was to help educate blind children, but this has been greatly broadened. Now there are books and magazines in Braille, and on tape, and on talking records, for readers of all ages.

Through grants and donations from many generous people, a number of these books and magazines are available free on loan, through public libraries. Information as to where and how to find them is a key to their use, as well as to the special type of phonograph which must be used to play the 15-3 rpm Talking Book records, can be had through local and state agencies, commissions and other groups for the blind.

Most libraries can either tell you about the available books or the source for local information.

But, perhaps even better this Christmas-time would be to give a personal year's subscription to a Talking Magazine which will be mailed each week or month all through the year to the person you select. It would mean a whole year's pleasure and entertainment, for someone you know whose vision leaves them stranded along the stream of life.

There are Talking Magazines to fit the individual tastes of every man, woman and child. Some of the magazines listed are: The Atlantic Monthly, Changing Times, The Kiplinger Magazine, The Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine, The Farm Journal, Harper's; Sports Illustrated; Jack and Jill; The Episcopalian; The John Milton Recorded Sunday School Lessons; Newsweek; The Reader's Digest; Presbyterian Life, and many others.

You can buy a subscription to one of these for a friend whose sight comes within the accepted definition of blindness, or you may donate money for one or several subscriptions to various funds which make it possible to send these Talking Magazines free to public libraries.

The Talking Books and the Talking Magazines are not inexpensive, but, though Braille publications cost less, there are many people, both young and older, who have not learned "finger-talk" and for whom there is a special companionship. Numerous libraries will provide the phonograph records telling a story, giving the background of current events, and so on.

There is a great story that could be told of the cooperation which has made these many books for the blind available everywhere.

There are things like the generous cooperation in both money and engineers of the

International Business Machines Corporation, which made it possible to translate ink-print into Braille. Teachers, schools and research agencies have all worked together to help provide these "bridges to living" for the blind.

For information on what books and magazines are available, how much they cost—magazine subscriptions run from $10 to $87 a year—how they can be sent, etc., write to Miss Hazel V. Maffet, Circulation, American Printing House for the Blind, P. O. Box 6085, 1839 Frankfort Ave., Louisville, Ky. 40206. To make a Christmas donation to help the whole great project along, write the same address for information.

Margaret Dana welcomes your questions and comments on buying. Comments will be used as often as possible in the BEFORE YOU BUY column, but questions about buying should be addressed to CONSUMER'S QUESTION-BOX where they will appear as rapidly as research and space permit.

Copyright 1966

The State and The Columbia Record on December 4, 1966
Six Pioneer life members from Columbia were honored recently by the State Library Board for 13 years of volunteer work with the "Talking Book" program for the blind. Dr. Carlanna Hendrick of Florence, board chairman, presented a plaque to L. B. Smith, second from left, and R. S. Morris, Jr. At right is James B. Johnson, Jr., director of the library's services for the blind and physically handicapped. Other life members who repair talking book machines are Eugene Smith, M. A. Derrick, L. F. Davis and J. R. Gurley.

The Life Member Club of South Carolina Chapter 61 of the Telephone Pioneers of America received a special award in recognition of thirteen years of volunteer repairs of talking-book machines for South Carolina State Library. The award was presented by South Carolina Library Board Chairman, Dr. Carlanna Hendrick and James B. Johnson, Jr., director of state library services for the blind and physically handicapped, to retired Southern Bell employees L. B. Smith and Richard S. Morris, Jr., representing the club.

Two articles published in Columbia, SC September 1977
In recognition of 20 years of volunteer service, The State Library recently presented Certificates of Appreciation to seven members of the Telephone Pioneers of America, South Carolina Chapter No. 61. Pictured left-to-right, standing, are: James R. Gurley, J. D. Dozier, P. H. Alexander and James Moore. Sitting, left-to-right are: E. D. Smith, F. L. Davis and R. S. Morris, Jr.

Published in The State Newspaper

These Pioneers were recognized for their service to the State Library. Standing, from left, is James Gurley, J. D. Dozier, P. H. Alexander and James Moore, and seated from left, E. D. Smith, F. L. Davis and Richard Morris.

Published in the Pioneer News

Two Articles published in Columbia, SC
July 1, 1980

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Radio Pioneers were honored at a reception at the South Carolina State Library for the blind and handicapped on Knox Abbott Drive. The pioneers, retired employees of Southern Bell, repair record and cassette players for the library. From left pioneers are J.D. Dozier, Gene Smith, Jimmy Moore, Tom Murray, Jim Gurley, Tom Fielder, Richard Morris and Lawrence Davis.

Article in the State Newspaper in 1983
Governor's Awards honor volunteer service

Southern Bell and the Telephone Pioneers have received South Carolina Governor's Awards for Outstanding Volunteer Service.

Gov. Dick Riley created the awards in 1983 to encourage citizens in the state to volunteer their time and talents to their communities. The company and the Pioneers are among 24 individuals and organizations selected for the 1985 awards.

Southern Bell was presented the award for Outstanding Workplace Volunteer, which is given to the corporation, business or trade association which has demonstrated commitment to the community through an active program of volunteer service.

The company was cited for both "the scope and tradition" of its volunteer community service, both by the Telephone Pioneers and by employees who volunteer independently.

In addition, a group of Pioneer Life Members from Columbia received one of the Outstanding Volunteer Group Awards for their outstanding volunteer service with the Commission for the Blind.

The group of Pioneers repair 1,000 talking book machines a year for the blind community in S.C., enabling them to use the services of the state library.

"The Library of Congress began the talking books program in 1932," said Life Member Richard Morris, Jr. "In 1960, the national Pioneer office was asked to assist the Library of Congress, which was having trouble keeping the machines repaired.

"At that time, Al Spears was president of the S.C. Pioneer Chapter and he asked me to be the chairman of the committee that started the program in the state."

Morris has worked on talking book repairs for all but six years since. Other Life Members currently meeting once a week as a part of the program are Tom Fielder, James Porter, J. T. Eargle, W. J. Moore, Gene Smith, Tom Murray, Hugh Oldham and P. H. Alexander. Also, until recently, Lawrence Davis had worked with the program since its early days.

"Repairs were originally done in an office on Bull Street in Columbia," said Morris. "After several years, we set up a workshop in the old Southern Bell building on Laurens Street. We were there a few years until Southern Bell let us set up in an office at the Truman Street Work Center, which is now owned by AT&T."

Morris is also the answer to a Southern Bell trivia question. If you're ever asked who came up with the name for the Palmetto Employee NEWS, you can tell them it was Richard Morris, Jr.

Morris submitted the name in response to a contest held in 1964 when the employee paper was originally published. "I won an AM/FM radio, but someone stole it," Morris said.

Vice President Buddy Henry accepts Southern Bell's award from Gov. Dick Riley.

Gov. Dick Riley presents the volunteer award to Pioneer Life Members, from left, Tom Fielder, Tom Murray, Lawrence Davis, Gene Smith, W. J. Moore and Richard Morris.

Article in the Pioneer News May 31, 1985
Columbia group repairs Talking Books

Life Members provide invaluable service to the blind

They don’t fix a lot of telephones anymore or help Southern Bell customers with their service like they used to.

The 10 Life Members in Columbia who fix Talking Books cater to different customers now, ones who desperately need their service.

"It may seem like we’re just a bunch of guys getting together to talk about our good old telephone days, but it’s much more than that," according to Richard Morris, Jr., who retired from Southern Bell in 1967. "Every time we repair a Talking Book machine we’re helping a blind person enjoy a book that he or she may not be able to enjoy otherwise, and that’s a great feeling."

Talking Books are records and tapes furnished by the Library of Congress and distributed by South Carolina State Library to blind citizens who can’t read. The Library of Congress also furnishes record and tape machines used to play the recordings.

When the Talking Books program first began in 1960 the Library of Congress paid repair shops to fix the machines. It was costly, and sometimes the machines came back still broken.

The Telephone Pioneers of America volunteered to fix the machines for free as one of their national projects. The 10 Life Members who work on the machines in South Carolina are only a handful of Talking Book volunteers across the nation.

Last year we fixed 1,000 machines," says Morris. "There are 7,000 in use statewide."

"The group gets together every Tuesday at AT&T’s Truman Street location in Columbia to fix the machines," according to Morris. "Most of us work on the machines for two or three hours and some of us stay well into the afternoon."

The State Library picks up the fixed machines and leaves other broken ones for the group to work on.

"We love to sit around and talk about other telephone people," says Tom Murray, another group member. "Seriously, we get a lot of personal problems off our chest and help each other out with great fellowship."

"We talk a lot about the telephone business," according to P. H. Alexander. "We reorganize the Bell System every three months or so."

Other members of the Talking Books group are J. T. Eargle, Tommy Fielder, Jim Gurley, Jimmy Moore, Tom Murray, Hugh Odom, and Gene Smith.

A group of Life Members (left) gathers in the basement of AT&T’s Truman Street location in Columbia to repair Talking Book machines. Gene Smith (above) examines a broken tape player.
This year, the Telephone Pioneers of America are celebrating 30 years of volunteer service to repair talking book equipment. Our library has ten retired Southern Bell employees who volunteer to run our machine repair program. On Thursday, April 26, 1990, these Pioneers were honored as the Midlands Volunteer Group of the Year by the Voluntary Action Center. They received their award at the Center's Volunteer Recognition Luncheon during National Volunteer Week.

In 1960, a small group of Pioneers in Columbia volunteered to repair talking book equipment in South Carolina. Today, several of the original members still repair machines. Recognition and our sincere thanks go to Richard S. Morris; chairman, P. H. Alexander, Gene Smith, W. J. Moore, Tom Fielder, Tom Murray, Hugh Oldham, Joe E. Spears, Sr., R. N. Hawkinson, and Tom McKeown who volunteer each Tuesday to repair record players and cassette machines.

During their years as volunteers for the S.C. State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, they have contributed 32,000 hours of service. In the past three decades, the Pioneers have repaired more than 4,500 record players and almost 9,000 cassette machines. These hard working men have significantly improved the service received by our readers and saved the library many thousands of dollars in repair costs.
The United Way of the Midlands of S. C. Voluntary Action Center selected The Retired Telephone Pioneers of America's group of talking book machine and tape recorder repair men as the most outstanding volunteers for the year 1990. Six of the ten men in the group are members of the Columbia Golden K Club.

This group of ten men is the only such group in South Carolina. They repaired, 500 "talking book" machines and about 9,000 cassette tape recorders during 1989. They spend more than 30 hours a week doing this for physically handicapped patrons of the S. C. State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

They were awarded a silver bowl trophy with the following inscription: "CARNATION COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD, MIDLANDS VOLUNTEER GROUP OF THE YEAR, APRIL 26, 1990, RETIRED TELEPHONE PIONEERS OF AMERICA, CHAPTER 61, TALKING BOOK REPAIR GROUP."

Shown above, left to right: Joe Spears, Gene Smith, P.H. Alexander, Richard Morris, Tom Fielder and Hugh Oldham. Members of Columbia Golden K, they were among the group of ten Telephone Pioneers of America selected by The United Way of the Midlands of S.C. as the most outstanding volunteer group of the year. They were awarded a silver bowl inscribed with their accomplishments. It is held by Richard Morris, fourth from left, chairman of the group. (Photo by Martin Meadows)
Keep talking

Volunteers make sure disabled can continue to hear recordings

By Norma McLean
Staff Writer

When Donald Capps listens to a current events magazine on his record player or a biography on his cassette machine, he can thank Telephone Pioneer Richard Morris.

Morris and other members of the volunteer service organization keep the machines in working order.

"The Telephone Pioneers make the difference between being able to read and not to read, and I salute them for the wonderful work they do," Capps said.

Capps, who retired from Colonial Life and Insurance Co. in 1985, has been blind since 1953.

He and about 7,500 other blind or physically handicapped people have access to the machines, books and periodicals through the South Carolina State Library.

When the machines break down, they can be mailed free through the U.S. Postal Service to the State Library.

Volunteers----

(Continued from page 1)

which sees that they are delivered to the local telephone company repair shop near Trenholm Plaza in Forest Acres.

Morris, 89, lives in Columbia. He set up the Talking Book Equipment Repair Program in June 1960, when he retired from the telephone company after 45 years.

Today, he still heads the program.

"We enjoy doing it," Morris said. "Ten of us get together every Tuesday for four hours and repair about 40 machines a week."

There's fellowship and camaraderie, and it's for a worthwhile cause, said Pioneer Dick Hawkinson of Irmo.

Naomi Bradey, volunteer services coordinator for the blind and physically handicapped at the State Library, said the program saves them a tremendous amount of money. Otherwise, she said, they would have to hire staff to repair hundreds of machines every month.

Bradey, who lives in St. Andrews, figures that since the South Carolina Telephone Pioneers began repairing the machines 31 years ago, they have volunteered 34,000 hours and repaired 12,000 cassette machines and 5,100 record players.

"In June 1980, the Telephone Pioneers repair program, which is nationwide, repaired their millionth machine," Morris said.

When the machines are fixed, they are returned to the State Library, which issues them to patrons.

The library stocks about 280,000 copies of books on tape, including fiction and non-fiction, from best-sellers and Westerns to love stories and mysteries.

Periodicals for people of all ages are also available, including news, business, religion, sports, nature and women's and children's magazines. There is no charge for books or periodicals that circulate through the State Library.

For more information, write the South Carolina State Library, Department for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, 311 Gervais St., P.O. Box 821, Columbia 29202, or call 737-9970.

Article in The State newspaper
April 23, 1991

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Naomi Bradey, volunteer services coordinator for the blind and physically handicapped at the State Library.
Telephone Pioneers keep machines working for blind

By Norme McLean
Staff Writer

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Volunteers - - Hearts at Work

Volunteers of the S.C. State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped help in many ways to assure a high quality library service. On September 19, a reception was held to celebrate accomplishments and to say thank you to our volunteers.

Although it is well known that Telephone Pioneers volunteer to repair talking book equipment, there are also volunteers who inspect cassette books to make sure a complete and usable copy of a book is issued. Some of our newest volunteers are narrators who have recorded books and magazines about South Carolina. Many other individuals volunteer in areas such as magazine circulation, data entry, clerical duties, the mailroom, and as members of the Advisory Council.

Sixty-five volunteers donated 2,749 hours of service from July 1, 1990 - June 30, 1991. In addition to donating their skills and time, they serve as ambassadors and promoters of this library by telling their friends, relatives, and coworkers about this service. The value of these generous people can not be overstated.
Bell retirees answer call to provide service for blind

More people die, in my opinion, from disuse of their minds than from disuse of their bodies. Obviously, physical exercise is good, but mental exercise is even better if you want to stay alive and kicking.

Every day one reads in the newspaper the obituaries of men who retired a year or two ago — or even less — and then quietly died just as they were hoping to “enjoy life.”

Why this is, I don’t know with scholarly certitude. But I do have a theory:

These men had concentrated so hard on their jobs, that when it came to their retirement, they felt empty and unwanted and bored with doing nothing.

Southern Bell Pioneers

I recently formulated this theory after a visit with some retired men who might live forever. They’re the Southern Bell Pioneers who, for the past three decades, have spent each Tuesday repairing talking book machines and record players for the blind.

They gather at the Southern Bell building on Trenholm Road, next door to Arby’s.

Balding, paunchy, fat and thin, they resemble nothing so much as Santa’s elves — their work spaces crammed with voltage meters, electric screw drivers, Q-tips and cleaning spray.

To a man, they are warm and affable old-timers who feel good about themselves and their volunteer service.

“We also make the world safe for democracy,” quipped Dick Hawkinson of Irmo. “We not only fought the Persian Gulf War in a week, we helped clean out the State House.”

Richard Morris Jr. is the oldest of the 10 “elves”; he’s 89. Joe Speares is the youngest; he’s 65. Collectively, they have an average age of 74.4 years, which represents a lot of living, as opposed to dying.

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Points of light

George Bush never met these men. But he was referring to them when he spoke about “the thou-

sand points of light” in his inaugural address.

They are volunteers doing good deeds on the private dime instead of the public dollar.

In 1960, the Library of Congress asked the nation’s Pioneers to take over the repair of the machines: The private services the library had hired were unsatisfactory.

Morris, who retired 27 years ago, formed the Columbia workshop, and in the past 31 years, the men have volunteered 34,000 hours and repaired 12,000 cassette machines and 5,100 record players.

“Each one of us fixes about five machines a week,” said Morris.

The other Bell retirees are no slouches.

They are Gene Smith, 86; Jimmy Moore, 77; R.H. “Big Daddy” Alexander, 77; Tom Fielder, 73; Hugh Oldham, 71; Tom Murray, 70; Tom McKeown, 70 and Hawkinson, 66.

As icing on the cake, Morris’ wife bakes a tin of cookies for each man on his birthday.

If it weren’t for the Pioneers, says Naomi Bradley of the State Library, which distributes the machines and tapes in South Carolina, the library would have to hire a full-time staff to repair the hundreds of machines. That would cost thousands of taxpayer dollars.

This way, the Pioneers keep the machines running for free, and the state’s blind and physically handicapped enjoy the 280,000 copies of books on tape, ranging from best-sellers and Westerns to love stories and mysteries.

It’s not an earthshaking story, of course, but its significance is rather profound.
A tribute to an outstanding volunteer

Few individuals are as dedicated and committed to a program as Richard S. Morris, Jr. was to the talking book equipment repair program. Morris established the Columbia Telephone Pioneer talking book repair program in 1960 and supervised it until 1992. Never accepting defeat, he repaired talking book equipment that others declared hopeless. A Life Member of the Telephone Pioneers of America, Morris ended his work with the repair program he loved so much, only after the loss of vision in one eye made it too difficult for him to continue.

During his leadership and supervision, the Columbia Telephone Pioneers received local and statewide recognition for their volunteer efforts for the library. Morris and fellow pioneers repaired over 17,000 cassette and talking book machines. Impressive numbers for an impressive, hard working, and extremely dedicated volunteer. Although Morris passed away on January 27, 1994, his legacy, the Columbia Telephone Pioneers, will serve as a striking and lasting example of how one person can make a difference in the lives of so many.
Books on Tape—Sound Clear as a Bell

While most of the activity at the Sunset Central Office in Columbia is buzzing through miles of phone wires, on Tuesday morning from 10:00 AM until 12:00 noon, there is a different sort of buzz going on. Each week, nine Life Member retirees gather for a couple of hours to repair cassette players for the Talking Book Program and, as Dick Hawkinson puts it, "to chat and solve the world's problems."

The Talking Book Program is run by the Library of Congress to provide blind and handicapped citizens with an opportunity to listen to books, magazines and newspapers on tape. The cassettes and cassette players are loaned out through libraries in each state and people are welcome to keep the players as long as they like or until they are in need of repair.

When the program began, the government used an outside firm for repair and maintenance on the machines, which quickly became very expensive. Always on the lookout for ways to serve their communities, the Telephone Pioneers of America saw an opportunity. Among their resources were retired people with technical experience and time to donate their skills. Richard Morris got the program started among BellSouth Pioneers in South Carolina in 1960. BellSouth graciously provides space for a workshop and the tools needed to make the repairs.

While most of the men have technical experience from their years with BellSouth, Mr. Hawkinson provides training to newcomers on how to fix the machines. And for those repairs that aren't quite so easy to fix, the men know they can always look to Tom McKeown, better known as the "Good Machine Fairy". Tom has inherited this title from his predecessor, Richard Morris, who could also miraculously fix those machines that proved too stubborn for the rest of the group.

The volunteers turn out about 50 or 60 repaired machines each month. And when you look at the impact nationwide, the results are astounding. In a 1996 Commendation for Service from the Library of Congress, the volunteers were recognized for their diligence and skill that led to high quality repair and a volunteer labor contribution valued at $54,700,000! What a bargain for the U.S. government! And what a service for the blind and handicapped.
In remembrance of a dedicated volunteer

For twenty years, Richard “Dick” Hawkinson spent most Tuesday mornings repairing talking book equipment for the library. He knew that if he made repairs to a record player or cassette machine, it would be mailed to someone who needed it to read their talking books. Since 1992, he led the dedicated group of Telcom Pioneer volunteers who repair talking book equipment.

The library staff enjoyed seeing Dick because he always greeted you with a big smile and a handshake or a hug. He almost always had a joke or funny story to share. Afterwards, he’d usually say, “well it’s time to haul off and repair a machine or two.”

We were saddened by Dick’s death on August 20, 2007. Demonstrating his dedication to the Pioneers and the repair program, he worked until August 7th, “still wearing his big smile.”

He was an Air Force veteran, retired from Illinois Bell and was a lifetime member of the Telcom Pioneer organization. This friendly and fun-loving volunteer will be fondly remembered.

Article in remembrance to Richard (Dick) Hawkinson
ABOUT TALKING BOOK SERVICES

A Family Legacy

Before the Talking Books library existed in South Carolina, volunteers were repairing record players that were being used by blind library patrons. In 1961, Richard S. Morris, Jr., organized the first group of volunteers that started the talking book machine repair program in Columbia. At that time, the repair program had become a nationwide Telephone Pioneer project. In our state, all the members were active or retired employees of Southern Bell.

Thirty years after Mr. Morris organized the original group, the Pioneers’ accomplishments were impressive. 12,000 cassette machines and 5,100 record players had been repaired. They had contributed over 34,000 hours of volunteer service. Several years before Mr. Morris retired from his volunteer job, he was interviewed for a newspaper article. The satisfaction he felt was evident, “Every time we repair a Talking Book machine we’re helping a blind person enjoy a book that he or she may not be able to enjoy otherwise, and that’s a great feeling.”

Today, Mr. Morris’ legacy is being continued by his son, Richard S. Morris, III, who joined the repair group in May 2007. He is retired from BellSouth and is now mastering the techniques and tricks that it takes to get a cassette machine in good working condition. He and eight other Pioneers work every Tuesday morning in the library. They no longer repair record players, but repair and recondition our entire inventory of cassette machines. Now, almost 47 years since the work began, more than 27,300 cassette players have been repaired, with volunteers working over 56,600 hours.

With the end of production for these cassette players, the role these volunteers play in the Talking Books program is more important than ever! We applaud their overwhelming dedication and commitment to library services for visually impaired and handicapped library patrons!
PROFILE OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA PIONEER REPAIR GROUP

Before the Talking Books library existed in South Carolina, volunteers were repairing Talking Book record players. In 1961, Richard S. Morris, Jr., organized the first group of volunteers that started the Talking Book machine repair program in Columbia. All the volunteers were active or retired employees of Southern Bell.

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Today, Mr. Morris' legacy is being continued by his son, Richard S. Morris, III, who joined the repair group in May, 2007. He and eight other Pioneers work every Tuesday morning in the library, reconditioning our entire inventory of cassette machines. Now, almost 47 years since the work began, more than 27,300 cassette players have been repaired, with volunteers working over 56,600 hours. The S.C. State Library applauds the overwhelming dedication and commitment of these volunteers to library services for visually impaired and handicapped library patrons!

Naomi Brady, Volunteer Coordinator, Talking Book Services, S.C. State Library
Family legacy inspires mass repair effort

Seventy-nine-year-old Richard S. Morris III carries on his father's legacy of volunteer work and entrepreneurial spirit, one that has served the talking-book patrons of South Carolina for nearly half a century. The volunteer group his father started has repaired more than 27,300 cassette players, with volunteers donating more than 56,600 hours of work.

In 1961, even before a talking-book library was established in South Carolina, Richard S. Morris Jr. organized a group of telephone company retirees in Columbia to join the national Telephone Pioneers volunteer organization (now called TelecomPioneers) to repair talking-book players for South Carolina patrons receiving service from North Carolina. By 1991 Morris's group had repaired 12,000 cassette machines and 5,100 record players, contributing more than 34,000 hours of service. In a newspaper interview the elder Morris gave in 1991, it was evident that he found his volunteer work satisfying: "Every time we repair a talking-book machine, we're helping a blind person enjoy a book that he or she may not otherwise be able to enjoy, and that's a great feeling."

Richard Morris III remembers his father: "He became the real technical expert of the group. Everyone would go to him with the problems they couldn't solve. My dad won several awards, including one from the governor. He was also named Pioneer of the Year for his participation with and formation of this group."

Morris Jr. led the volunteer unit until a few months before his death in 1994, contributing a total of 33 years of service to South Carolina patrons. His colleagues continued the repair work after Morris died, and in 2008 they asked his son to join the group.

Morris III said, "After my father died the other members asked me if I wanted to come down and join the group—and I said very much so. It's more than just a group of repairmen. We're really like brothers."

"We feel like we are really contributing to the needs of the blind community. We think it is an honor to be able to meet their needs in this way. I have a friend in Knoxville who lost his sight and uses this service. He says talking books are a good tool for helping the visually impaired."

Morris III and eight other volunteers work every Tuesday morning in the library. They no longer repair record players, but repair and recondition the library's inventory of cassette machines.

"With the end of production for these cassette players, the role volunteers play in the talking-book program is more important than ever! The S.C. State Library applauds their overwhelming dedication and commitment to library services for visually impaired and handicapped library patrons," remarked Naomi Bradey, volunteer coordinator.
NEVER PUTTING LIFE ON HOLD

Elite volunteer group aids the blind

By JOY L. WOODSON
jwoodson@thesate.com

A

N INVITATION TO this elite volunteer group is extended only if someone dies.
Callous, some might say, but true.
And there's no time or space for somber, sore moods — not at this table of nine former telephone-company workers in their 70s and 80s who are as good at fixing things as they are at having a good time.
They are the Telecom Pioneers, recognized as the state's only volunteer group that repairs cassette players the blind use to read. The machines are part of the State Library's Talking Book Services, which provides reading materials to the blind and others with significant vision impairment or physical disabilities.
"They told me that when I came in — you go out feet first," said Frank Gunter, 73, who volunteers with the others every Tuesday in the State Library basement on Senate Street.

Bill Blythe replaces a drive assembly on a player.
"We feel like we're giving back by giving our time and abilities to repair this equipment."

SEE PIONEERS PAGE B2
Even when one is sick — and several have been — no one is replaced.

Normally, they repair three to four machines each on a typical Tuesday. By the end of a year, they have logged countless hours repairing at least 1,000 machines. And, at cost of $70 a machine, the Pioneers are saving the state roughly $70,000 a year.

"We all have a desire to help people that need help," said volunteer Bill Blythe. "We feel like we're giving back by giving our time and abilities to repair this equipment."

MAKING TIME FOR FUN

In 1961, Richard Morris Jr. organized the first group of volunteers who started the state's Talking Book repair program.

At the time, they were repairing record players.

After working on the machines for nearly 30 years, Morris became blind himself.

Today, his son, Richard Morris III, is a member and helping to carry on the legacy. He retired after more than 30 years with BellSouth and became part of the volunteer repair team last year. The group's "prestige," he said, comes from its history, the camaraderie and the feeling that you're helping others.

"This is all about giving back," said Ted Floyd, 69.

Between the nine volunteers, there are about 300 years of experience. Many were telephone-company technicians who saw the evolution of phones and computer technology near its infancy.

Many, like Morris, covet bits and pieces of yesteryear. In his computer room, there's an old switchboard, yellowed phone books at least 60 years old and a candlestick phone popular in the early 1900s, among other things.

Back in the library basement where they work, the pace is frenetic — yet they make time to catch up.

How much work gets done depends on how much they talk — about their wives, about politics, about old days at the telephone company.

"I can't talk and work too well," said Ralph Baxter, 81, leaning down to peer into his machine.

At times, Blythe talks to his machines instead of his neighbors: "OK, Mr. Machine," he said to one ornery cassette player, "I expect you to run, and I expect you to do it well, or I'll put you in the trash."

George Entzminger was "voted" the group's leader, he says, shrugging his shoulders.

"Anything goes wrong," Baxter yelled out, "we blame it on him."

They affectionately call themselves the "Nine Wise Men," for having an opinion on just about everything — and freely sharing it.

During the day, they generally break to eat cookies, cakes or pies. Today, it's banana nut bread made by Frank Gunter's wife.

LIKE FAMILY

Rounding out the bunch are: Tom Murray and Martin Lowery, World War II veterans; and E.G. Taylor, a craftsman who makes wooden animals for his friends.

Murray, 87, has volunteered more than two decades with the Talking Book repair program. Of the current group, he has been there the longest. Lowery, 86, has volunteered almost as long as Murray.

But how Taylor came to be part of the group, Lowery suspects, had something to do with his golf swing, or his wife.

"His back started hurting — found out he was old," he said. That, or "his wife run him out of the house. She gets tired of him hanging around, I hate to say it, but I'm telling the truth."

"He ain't too far from wrong," Taylor said.

"Probably applies to all of us," another shouted.

Even with all the fun, the group never forgets others who have passed away — at least 12 since the repair program started.

One of the most recent was Richard "Dick" Hawkinson, a volunteer for 20 years who died in 2007. At any point, volunteers know, they could be next.

So they cherish the time fixing machines together, acting more like brothers than anything else.

That family feeling is something, they say, from the bygone days at the telephone company, where people cared about people.

"It's a parallel legacy," Morris said. "I think that is the thing that holds us together."

Reach Woodson at (803) 771-8692.
Special Recognition for Pioneer Volunteers

The S.C. Library Association (SCLA), a statewide organization, selected our Pioneer machine repair group to receive a special award last October. All of the Pioneers and their wives were invited to attend the Awards Brunch during the annual conference in Columbia.

They were selected to receive this special honor “in recognition and appreciation for 48 years of exceptional service to the library community.” The Telcom Pioneers, the volunteers who repair our entire inventory of cassette players, received a standing ovation by librarians from across the state. They were impressed by the impact their volunteer service has had on thousands of library patrons over nearly five decades. Some were moved to tears when a letter from a young patron was read, thanking each individual Pioneer for taking care of her cassette player. In addition to the plaque they were presented, they also received new personalized work aprons.

Over the years, our Pioneer repair group has received other awards, including recognition from the United Way and the Office of the Governor. All of these awards will be included in a special publication that is being created by one of the members, Richard Morris. Using his passion for genealogical research, he is producing a historical timeline of the Pioneer’s involvement in the machine repair program, on a national and state level.
Equipment
and
Repair
Combined Record Player and Cassette Machine

A-76 Turntable

C-75 Cassette
C-1 Talking Book Cassette Player ready to receive repair kit
Stickers placed on machines following repair or update
Items found inside Talking Book Machines while repairing
Awards received by the Talking Book Repair Group

Nov. 1966   Library of Congress Award
Sept. 1977  State Library Board (13 years of Volunteer Work) (Missing)
July 1980   Library of Congress Award (Twenty Years of Service)
May 1985   Governor’s Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service (Missing)
June 1985  Letter of appreciation from Earl E. Morris, Jr. Comptroller General
April 1990 The Volunteer Action Center of the Midlands Certificate of Appreciation
Nov. 1990   (Silver Bowl) United Way of the Midlands SC Volunteer Action Center (Missing)
Sept. 1996 Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, The Commendation for Service Award (Missing)
Aug. 2004  S C State Library To the Talking Book Repair Program
2004       Certificate of Appreciation from The Telephone Pioneers
Oct. 2009  The South Carolina Association Library Special Award

South Carolina State Library Plaque for Members with over Ten years Service

Awards for Richard Morris, Jr.

April 1985 State of South Carolina, I Care Award
1990       Library of Congress, Talking Book Machine Repair Program

Outstanding Volunteer Award 1960-1992
Award received from the Library of Congress in November 1966
The Library of Congress
is grateful
to the
Telephone Pioneers
of America
for dedicated service
especially
R. S. MORRIS, JR.
TWENTY YEARS SERVICE

[Signature]
Director, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

[Signature]
The Librarian of Congress

Award received in 1980
Telephone Pioneers of America
Chapter 61
% Mr. R. S. Morris, Jr.
739 Poinsettia Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29205

Dear Volunteers:

Congratulations on being selected to receive the Governor’s Award as an Outstanding Volunteer Group. This is a great honor and one which your accomplishments richly justify.

Your selection reflects appreciation for the distinguished service that you have been rendering to your community and our state for many years. It is this kind of dedication and ability that is so important to our state and nation and I want you to know I appreciate your efforts.

It is, indeed, an honor to be selected for this distinguished recognition. Keep up the good work and accept my best wishes for the future.

Sincerely,

EARLE E. MORRIS, JR.

EEMJR: emc
Certificate of Appreciation
Presented to the
Telephone Pioneers of America
Chapter 61
For Outstanding Volunteer Service
to the
South Carolina State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

Thanks to your willingness to share your thoughts, talent and time with others... you have helped to make our community a better place to live and work.

April 26, 1990
Chairman, Advisory Board
Voluntary Action Center
Certificate of Appreciation from
The Telcom Pioneers
Aug. 16, 2004
We the Telephone Pioneers of America, award Special Recognition to:

South Carolina Telecommunications Repair Team

For outstanding contributions that confirm the ideals of Fellowship, Loyalty and Service to which our Association and Sponsor Companies are dedicated.

2004

Signed: [Signature]
Coordinator: Region 16

Pioneers
In grateful appreciation to

S. C. Talking Book Equipment Repair Team

for valuable service rendered
in support of the national free
library program for blind and
physically handicapped readers

National Library Service
for the Blind and
Physically Handicapped

The Library of Congress

Director
Frank Kurt Cylke

OCTOBER 6, 2004

Certificate In grateful appreciation from the Library of Congress
October 6, 2004
Plaque presented to the Talking Book Repair Group by the State Library on October 30, 2009
Plaque for Talking Book Repairmen who have Volunteered 10 Years or more Service
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

For outstanding citizen involvement and for exemplary volunteer service to your community and to the State of South Carolina, I hereby recognize and designate

R. S. Morris, Jr.

as an

OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEER

on this 23rd day of April, 1985 at the Capitol in Columbia.

Richard W. Riley
Governor
In grateful appreciation to

Richard Morris
of the
Telephone Pioneers of America
for dedicated service through the Talking-Book Machine-Repair Program

National Library Service
for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

The Library of Congress

Director

1990
Plaque for Richard S. Morris, Jr.
1960 - 1992
November 29, 2008

To the Nine Wise Men

My name is Margaret and I am 17 and have had my yellow tape recorder since I was two. Mr. Murray and Mr. Lowery I bet you have repaired at least ten recorders because I use it every day. My grandparents telephone the State Library that a recorder has stopped and later we can come and pick up one. So Mr. Floyd, I get back one that you nice men have repaired and no one ever fusses at me! At first it was hard for me to push the buttons but that has helped me Mr. Blythe by making my fingers strong for reading my Braille. You are a good leader of these volunteers Mr. Entzminger. My Grampy is the leader of his golf group so Mr. Taylor if you would like to play a round, give him a call. Mr. Baxter you must talk to the recorders like my Grandmother Lady talks to her roll dough. Mr. Morris I am sorry your dad became blind but what he did by organizing these many volunteers has helped me and so many other users of the Talking Book Service. Mr. Gunter you and your friends might work in the basement but each of you sit high in my heart.

Margaret Simensen

Letter received from a patron about the men in the repair shop
Group Pictures and Photos
Johnny Black  Unknown  Richard Morris, Jr  Berley Eargle  Unknown

Talking Book repairmen in the early 1960's
Tom Murray

Richard Morris, Jr

Picture taken at the State Library October 4, 1983
Henry Castles  Richard Morris, Jr.  Steve Prine
Director from 1980-1982
of the Dept. for the Blind
and Physically Handicapped

Richard Morris, Jr receiving the Library of Congress
award for the Telephone Pioneer repair group in 1980
Picture of Gov. Dick Riley presenting the volunteer award to Pioneer Life Members May 31, 1985

Tom Fielder, Tom Murray, Lawrence Davis, Gene Smith, W. J. Moore and Richard Morris

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Repair Group 1990

Back row, left to right
Hugh Oldham, Dick Hawkinson, Tom Murray,
P H Alexander, Jimmy Moore

Front row, left to right
Tom McKeown, Richard Morris, Jr., Joe Spears, Tom Murray
Repair group 1994

Back Row, left to right
Tom Murray, Martin Lowery, George Entzminger, Dick Hawkinson

Front row, left to right
Hugh Oldham, Tom McKeown, Robert Ginn, Ralph Baxter, Tom Fielder
Repair Group October 1995

Back row, left to right
Robert Ginn, Dick Hawkinson, Tom McKeown, Ted Floyd

Front row, left to right
Ralph Baxter, Tom Murray, Joe Spears, Georg Entzminger
Volunteers from the Telephone Pioneers of America were recognized for their repair services to the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped at a breakfast Sept. 24.

During the past fiscal year (95-96) the Pioneers donated 1,434 hours of service and repaired 1,100 talking book machines. Volunteers were thanked for their many hours of service by Donald C. Capps, president, National Federation of the Blind of S.C. and John Robert Rogers, president, American Council of the Blind of S.C.

BellSouth President Joe Anderson also thanked the volunteers, all retired BellSouth employees, for contributing their time and expertise to repairing the machines so people with disabilities have access to books and magazines.

The Commendation for Service Award was presented by Stephen Prine, head, Network Services Section, Library of Congress. This award was for the total effort of the Pioneers which began in 1960. Since 1960, they have worked over 42,300 hours and repaired 5,500 record players and 18,500 cassette machines. This repair work is estimated to be worth $720,000.
Repair group 1997

Back row, left to right
Tom Murray, Hugh Oldham, Robert Ginn, Martin Lowery,
Dick Hawkinson, Ron Whitten (Staff Member), Tom McKeown

Front row, left to right
Ralph Baxter, Joe Spears, George Entzminger
Around the shop in 2000
Sunset
Central Office
Talking Book repair shop at Sunset
Central office in 2002
Repair group Dec 28, 2004

Back row, left to right
Dick Hawkinson, Tom Murray, Martin Lowery, George Entzminger
Ted Floyd, Frank Gunter

Front row, left to right
Ralph Baxter, Robert Ginn, E. G. Taylor
Repair group 2005

Back row, left to right
Robert Ginn, George Enrzminger, Dick Hawkinson, E G Taylor

Front Row, Left to right
Ralph Baxter, Ted Floyd, Martin Lowery
Repair group January 23, 2007

Back row, left to right
Tom Murray, Dick Hawkinson, Ralph Baxter, E G Taylor, Frank Gunter

Front row, left to right
Ted Floyd, Martin Lowery, George Entzminger
Repair group September 2007

Back row, left to right
Tom Murray, Ralph Baxter, E G Taylor, Frank Gunter, Ted Floyd

Front row, left to right
Bill Blythe, Martin Lowery, George Entzminger, Richard Morris, III
Presentation of a award at the South Carolina Library Association on October 30, 2009

Left to Right
George Entzminger, Ted Floyd, Tom Murray, Dave Goble, Ralph Baxter, Richard Morris, Pamela Devenport, Bill Blythe, Ron Whitten, Naomi Bradey
Repair group 2009

Back row, left to right
Ralph Baxter, Ted Floyd, Frank Gunter,
E G Taylor, George Entzminger

Front row, left to right
Tom Murray, Bill Blythe, Richard Morris, III, Martin Lowery