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Bibliographic Cover Sheet

Title **Blind Youth's Whistle Rings Telephone Bells Across U.S.**

Publication *Chicago Tribune*

Date 1968-11-28

Abstract Telephone company catches blind college student making free calls;
no prosecution.

Keywords Tampa, FL; Joe Engressia (phone phreak); The Whistler; University of
South Florida; H. E. Mason (GT security officer); J. F. Santoiana,
Jr. (FBI agent)

Source ProQuest

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Blind Youth's Whistle Rings Telephone Bells Across U. S.

Tampa, Nov. 27 (AP)—Joe Engressia, 19, a blind college student, whistled his way past long distance circuits and placed free calls across the country until he was found out by telephone officials.

Altho the telephone company doesn't want to prosecute him, Engressia may find himself disconnected from college.

Engressia, blind since birth, said that he made about \$25 placing calls for students at the rate of \$1 each when his thriving young business was upended by authorities.

Crowds Follow Him

"The guys in the dormitory were calling me 'The Whistler' and I was making call after call," Engressia said. "Crowds of up to 40 people would follow me around."

Engressia, who said he whistles with perfect pitch, said he found he could place calls by whistling varying series of a precise tone over the receiver. The tone can vary only 5 per cent, plus or minus, from 2,600 cycles per second.

To make a toll-free call, the youth said, he would dial long distance information to any city. Before the operator an-

swered, he would whistle the area code. If it were 212, for instance, he would whistle rapidly twice, pause, whistle once, pause, then twice again. Then he would whistle the seven-digit local number.

Gets Wrong Operator

Engressia said he first realized his talent at age 8, when he jumbled a call by whistling while waiting for the party to answer.

The end came when Engressia was trying to call a Long Island, N. Y., number for a student but got a Montreal operator. He asked her to help him dial the correct Long Island number.

"She was suspicious and monitored the call," he said. "Naturally the student I put the call thru for talked extensively about the 'whiz kid' who had placed his free call. The operator broke in and managed to get the student to identify himself and where he was calling from."

Telephone company officials contacted University of South Florida administrators, who soon tracked down Engressia.

He was called before the dean of men and told he would be "allowed to withdraw" for the

rest of the quarter or face suspension.

Said The Whistler: "I don't want to withdraw. I've got between an A and B average.

"I think he'd be an asset to our company," said H. E. Mason, security officer for General Telephone company. "But I don't think he will be able to work for us because he'd have to be on a part-time basis."

No Federal Violations

Mason said the company decided it had nothing to gain by prosecuting a blind college student, but added that he had turned over "evidence" in the case to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"We're obliged by law to do this when we have information on a criminal activity," he said.

J. F. Santoiana Jr., FBI agent in charge, said his office had investigated and determined no federal violation was involved.