



# ***Exploding The Phone***

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Bibliographic Cover Sheet

Title	<b>Troubles persist but Ma Bell plugs on</b>
Publication	<i>Herald &amp; News (Livermore, CA)</i>
Date	1973-04-29
Author(s)	Sullivan, Barbara
V/I/P	p. 1
Abstract	The first page of the article talks mainly about how simple the phone system used to be and how complicated it is now, with so many choices and so many ways to defraud the phone company.
Keywords	credit card fraud; phone phreaks; blue box
Notes	This article is headed "First of two articles" Abstract and keywords incomplete; second page of article missing

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# Troubles persist but Ma Bell plugs on

*Telephone  
'Phreaks,'  
cheaters  
a problem*

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Staff Writer

## First of two articles

Thirty years ago the word "telephone" conjured up one picture.

A black object with a small white circular center, on which was handwritten your four-digit phone number. You picked up the receiver, and the operator said "number please" and you were on your way. Hopefully.

The major difference between telephones was whether you had a private line or a party line. And how friendly your local operator was.

Like the doctors who make house calls, old-fashioned math and crewcuts, that not-so-long-ago black telephone has all but disappeared.

The average California resident today has 1.44 telephones in his home.

In the Livermore, Pleasanton area, that average comes a little higher, to about 1.7 phones per resident.

Those averages reflect all residents, regardless of what type of home or apartment they live in. If the averages reflected only families living in houses, the average would probably work out to a little over two phones per family.

The phone company puts a limit of seven phones in any one residence — if you want more than seven, you have to get another line (and another bill).

Phones have become part of the decor in the American home, and, in some homes, part of the status symbol — phones in the bathroom and separate phones for the kids.

The choices facing the person ordering his 1.77 telephones are about as varied as swatches of carpeting.

Black is still available; so are 10 other colors. Cords come in varying lengths, with a

nine-foot cord for the housewife who wants to go stir the soup or wash the dishes while she's on the phone.

There's the desk phone and the wall phone. There's the dial phone and the touchtone telephone — more graphically referred to as the push-button phone. There's the princess phone with its little light for the bedroom and there's the trimline phone with its dial or buttons on the receiver. There's a panel phone that fits flush into the wall.

However, the years that have seen the black box of a telephone change to a sleek part of the decor and the operator's voice change to a dial tone have not all brought all roses to Ma Bell.

Somewhere along the line, the image has changed from the friendly operator's voice to Establishment.

And it has become an acceptable part of life, for many people, to beat the Establishment.

According to a recent publication of the Bell Telephone Magazine, Bell lost some \$22.5 million from credit card and third party cheats in 1971. That's up a fantastic 543 per cent from a \$3.5 million loss from those two types of cheating in 1968.

Credit card cheating occurs when calls are charged to a phony credit number. And the third person cheating occurs when Person Number One calls Person Number Two and charges the call to either a nonexistent Person Number Three, or a third person picked at random from the phone book.

Then there are the phone "phreaks" who get their kicks from rigging up a device called the Blue Box that enables them to become, in effect, their own long distance operator.

It's somewhat of a sign of the times that much of the public does not regard such pastimes as criminal or even particularly wrong