



Exploding The Phone

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Phony Device Reaches Very Wrong Numbers

Manny Topol

MINEOLA—Peter Mokover, who majors in communication arts at the New York Institute of Technology in Old Westbury, apparently learned his trade well. Well enough, according to Nassau District Attorney Cahn, to build a device that let him make phone calls anywhere in the country for free.

Mokover, 19, was arrested yesterday in his home at 26 Henhawk Rd., Great Neck. In his bedroom, Cahn's detectives said, they found a small wooden box with a metal top. On the top were a group of pushbuttons, a pack socket, a switch and two wires. Inside the box, Cahn said, there was a small battery and a maze of wires and electronic parts that allowed Mokover to make his

calls. Mokover was not alone in his experiment, according to authorities. Upstate, eight college students, two of them from Long Island, were seized along with two more of the devices, which Cahn's office dubbed "little blue boxes." Jonathan Wolfert, 18, and Lee Mandler, 19, both of Great Neck, were among six students arrested at Clarkson Institute of Technology. Two other students, from the State University at Potsdam, also were taken into custody.

Cahn said that Mokover would place his calls by first calling Information, on his standard telephone, in the area that he wanted to reach. A call to Los Angeles, then, began with the 213 area code, followed by 555-1212. When an operator answered, Mokover threw the switch on the blue box, the wires of which were spliced into those of the regular telephone. This disconnected the operator, but

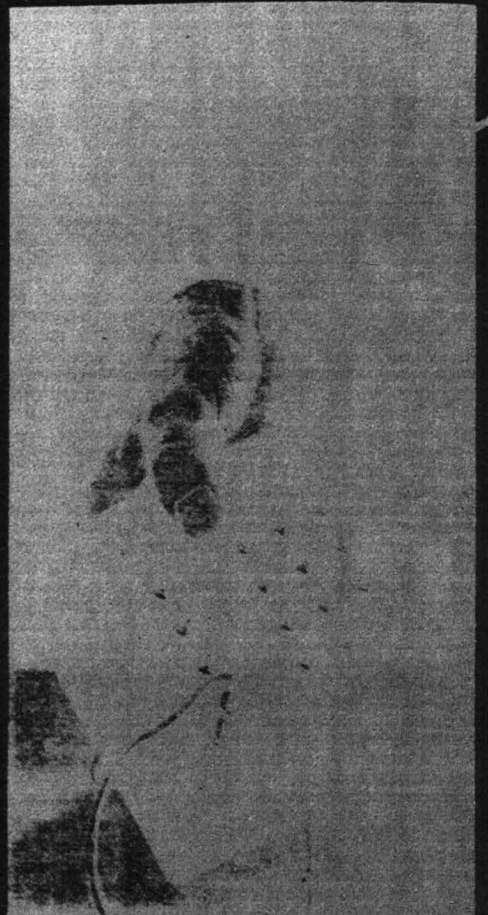
left Mokover on the Los Angeles circuit and allowed him to reach his party by punching the buttons on the box as one would with a touch-dial telephone, Cahn said. The call would not register on the telephone company's billing list.

The New York Telephone Co. became suspicious when it examined records from a computer that monitors Information calls. Some Information calls, the computer showed, were taking as long as 100 minutes, as compared with a normal time of one to three minutes.

The telephone company noted that many of the calls were originating in Nassau County and Cahn's office was contacted. Investigation, in cooperation with the State Police, showed that other calls of the same type were originating in the Potsdam N.Y., area, and this led police to the Clarkson and Potsdam operations, Cahn said.

Police said that the calls had been made back and forth among the blue-box owners, and to other points in the country, for months. There was no precise information available from the telephone company on how much it might have lost to the illegal callers. A 100-minute call to Los Angeles would cost \$25.10 at after-5 PM rates and \$42.65 at day rates. A telephone company spokesman said that "thousands of dollars" worth of calls had been made.

Mokover was charged with criminal tampering in the second degree and theft of service. If convicted, he could face a maximum of 18 months in jail. He was arraigned in Nassau First District Court and released in his father's custody to await trial.



Nassau Photo by Stan Wolfson

'Blue Box' Is Linked to Phone Call Fraud

By ROY R. SILVER

Special to The New York Times

MINEOLA, L. I., May 5—A 19-year-old Great Neck youth described by a faculty member of the New York Institute of Technology as a "boy genius" has been arrested with eight upstate students on charges of using electronic devices to make long-distance telephone calls free.

The arrests were made after a three-month investigation by security personnel of the New York Telephone Company, which said it had been cheated out of thousands of dollars.

The Great Neck youth, Peter Mokover, a sophomore at the New York Institute of Technology in Old Westbury, is "very bright with a high I.Q.," a teacher friend of his said yesterday. "He has literally worked with our technical department."

"He has a lot of good ideas," the teacher said.

"The odd thing is he doesn't need the money—he comes from a comfortable family," he continued. "But, if you can beat the system and beat the machine, if you can make the computer have a nervous breakdown..."

Of the other students arrested, six are from the Clarkson Institute of Technology at Potsdam, N. Y., and two are from the State University at Potsdam.

District Attorney William Cahn of Nassau County said the telephone company had sought his aid in investigat-

merous calls were allegedly made throughout the country without charge.

Armed with a court order, detectives of the prosecutor's rackets bureau and telephone company personnel searched the home at 26 Henhawk Road last night. They said they found a small box measuring 5 by 6 by 3 1/2 inches attached to a telephone in the youth's room.

The box, apparently homemade, contained a maze of wires, electronic equipment and a small battery, and had

14 buttons, a small switch and a hole for a jack on the top.

The prosecutor did not say who had made the box. The telephone company said similar devices had been used elsewhere in the country before.

According to Mr. Cahn, the device, known as a "blue box" — although it is not actually blue — worked as follows:

If the person wished to make a free toll call to the Los Angeles area, for ex-

ample, he would dial the area code—213—and then 555-1212 to reach the information operator there.

When the connection was made with the information operator, the caller used the switch on the top of the box to disconnect the operator. By doing this, he was connected to the area code telephone system.

Then, using the black buttons, he could punch any telephone number in the area without having the call recorded for charge purposes.

The telephone company became suspicious when computer cards showing the amount of time used for information calls indicated that some calls were taking much more than the usual one to three minutes.

An investigation by the company led to the Mokover youth's telephone and the telephones in Potsdam. The company spokesman said the upstate arrests "were tied in with calls made by the Great Neck boy." Two "blue boxes" were confiscated in Potsdam.

The state police in Potsdam identified those arrested: Lee Mandler, 19, of 29 King Point Road, Great Neck, L. I.; Jonathan Wolfert, 18, of Star Road, Great Neck, Dav. Levy, 19, of 67-49 Kess Street, Forest Hills, Queens; Elizabeth Dooley, 19, of 206 St. Raymond's Avenue, U. Bronx.

Also, William Carter, 19, of Baldwinsville, N. Y.; Robt. Darling, 24, of Marcy, N. Y.; John Waston, 23, of Utica,



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