



Exploding The Phone

db633

www.explodingthephone.com

Bibliographic Cover Sheet

Title **4 Arrested in Phone Trick**

Publication *West Chester Local*

Date 1971-09-28

Abstract Kenneth Spacil, Robert Helms, Francis Mitchell, and Mrs. Helen Williams arrested for blue box fraud in PA.

Keywords Kenneth Spacil (arrested); Robert Helms (arrested); Francis Mitchell (long lines employee, arrested); Helen Williams (Mrs., toll operator, arrested)

The following pages may contain copyrighted material. We believe that our use of this material for non-commercial educational and research purposes constitutes "fair use" under Section 107 of U.S. Copyright Law. If you wish to use this material for purposes that go beyond "fair use," you must obtain permission from the copyright owner, if any. While it will make us slightly sad to do so, we will nonetheless comply with requests from copyright owners who want their material removed from our web site.

4 arrested in phone trick

Four Chester County residents have been arrested and charged with making thousands of free telephone calls across the nation and around the world with the aid of an illegal electronic device known as the "blue box."

The Bell Telephone Co. has announced that it planned to push for full prosecution of what it termed the self-styled "phone phreaks."

The arrests in the county came

last night.

Those held were Kenneth M. Spacil, 18, of Glenmoore RD 2; Francis E. Mitchell, 27, of 335 Conestoga rd., Devon; Robert Helms, 20, of 205 Chestnut st., Downingtown, and Mrs. Helen Williams, 43, of 1304 Burke rd., West Chester.

William S. Cashel, Bell president, said the arrests were part of a nationwide crackdown on an underground group who on a daily

basis use the blue boxes to sieve hundreds of long distance circuits and chat with each other for as long as eight and 10 hours at a stretch just for kicks.

Another suspect is expected to be picked up by local police later today in Montgomery County.

Cashel said 57 other cases were under investigation in 14 states and at least one foreign country.

Mitchell is an employee of the long lines department of the

American Telephone and Telegraph Co. in Wayne, and Mrs. Williams is a Bell toll traffic operator who works in Bell's West Chester office.

"These people may consider their activity harmless fun and games but they are interfering in a very serious and dangerous way with the facilities essential to serving our paying customers," Cashel said.

"Furthermore they have on occasion, invaded the privacy of telephone users and in the course of their operation have defrauded the telephone company of thousands of dollars in revenue which inevitably must be made up by our customers."

Cashel said that so far this year there have been 38 arrests in the nation, 18 convictions and 19 cases are now pending.

The fraudulent calls were discovered Aug. 20 by a bell switchman as he checked the equipment in Bell's West Chester's Central office for "abnormal" conditions. From then until yesterday the company logged the evidence needed to make the arrests.

County Detective Eugene Sharpe said a large amount of sophisticated electronic equipment was seized as a result of the arrests.

The local arrests were made last evening in simultaneous raids by state, county and local police under the direction of the chief detective Sharpe and the district attorneys of both Chester and Montgomery counties.

The suspects were arraigned before District Justice John Catanese in Coatesville. All were released on bail ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000 each. A hearing has been scheduled for Oct. 8.