



Exploding The Phone

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Notes Good quotes, including from Esther Engressia and from a telco spokesman

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If You Want Long Distance, Just Whistle

HARRY HAIGLEY
Independent Reporter

A 19-year-old blind student caused some crossed circuits at the University of South Florida recently after he claimed he whistled his way to free long-distance telephone calls.

Miamian Joe Engressia has been blind since birth and developed super-sensitive ears.

"One day when I was about eight I accidentally discovered I could cut operators off by whistling into the phone," he told USF's student newspaper, The Oracle.

"One thing led to another, and I gradually learned how to place complete calls by whistling," he said.

ually learned how to place complete calls by whistling," he said.

As an electrical engineering student, Engressia boned up on telephone company repair manuals by having persons read the thick technical books to him.

Finally he said he learned to exactly duplicate the sounds made over telephone circuits during long-distance telephone calls.

Engressia claimed he could pick up a telephone, whistle several notes, and immediately be connected with telephones anywhere in the United States. Naturally he did all this without touching the dial.

A General Telephone Co. spokesman in St. Petersburg today said it is impossible to duplicate the whistling feat here.

"We did confirm that our Tampa branch has something like this under investigation," said J. S. Gresham of the St. Petersburg Telephone company.

"It could happen — but did it really?" he asked. "It would take a lot of sophisticated equipment and even then probability of being able to do this is remote," he said.

"But we don't have any equipment like that (equipment in Tampa) so nothing will happen for anyone whistling into a telephone here," he added.

He did say, however, that some direct dialing equipment is operated by a series of tones sent over telephone wires.

The word of Engressia's talents soon got around USF's Tampa campus and he said groups of "25 to 40 students" were following him around asking him to place free long-distance telephone calls for them.

Engressia placed several calls for friends and then his system broke down.

"I was trying to place a call for a student to Long Island," he said. "I whistled wrong and got Montreal by acci-



dent. Then I pretended to be an operator and asked the Montreal operator to help me dial the correct Long Island number.

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

Engressia was then called before USF's dean of men and suspended last Nov. 15 on the grounds he committed theft. A review of that suspension is now pending.

However, General Telephone in Tampa said it wasn't going to bring charges against Engressia. In fact, a spokesman said the company might hire him if USF approves.

The telephone company did say, however, it was going to turn all evidence in the case over to the FBI, to see whether there was a violation of federal laws.

And what do his parents in Miami, think of their son?

"We're going to stick right by him," Mrs. Esther Engressia said. "Anyone who can outsmart a computer — I'm with them," she said.

Cash For

There's money in St. Petersburg sunshine — or the lack of it.

Since Oct. 19, when the city set