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- Abstract**       "The US Embassy in Moscow was patched into a toll free 'phone freak conference,' a blind self styled 'phone freak' has testified in U.S. District Court. [...]" Discusses trial of David C. Henny, Whidbey Island, and the Whidby Island conference call and May Day celebrations. Describes conference call lasting 60 hours, Cap'n Crunch being part of it
- Keywords**     Joe Engressia; David Henny; Whidbey Island; John Draper

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# Memphis Phone Freak Tells of Toll-Free Calls

TACOMA, Wash. — (AP) — The U.S. Embassy in Moscow was patched into a toll-free "phone freak conference" a blind, self-styled "phone freak" has testified in U.S. District Court.

Joseph Engressia, 24, of Memphis, Tenn., said he used the facilities of the Whidbey Island Telephone Co. to make the call to Moscow.

Engressia testified Thursday in the trial of David C. Henny, owner of the Whidbey Island Telephone Co. Henny is charged in a 14-count indictment with fraud and eavesdropping in connection with his operation of the utility.

Engressia said he phoned Moscow to talk about the Russian May Day celebrations. "I pretended I was a radio announcer and asked all about the May Day celebrations there. The call was patched to the Whidbey con-



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ference call so they could hear the conversation," he testified.

He said he talked to Moscow from 8 p.m. April

30, 1971, until about noon the following day while conference members listened in.

The conference lasted about two weeks, during which time "freaks" throughout the country could talk with each other by calling a special number that hooked them into Whidbey Island equipment.

There were usually about four to five participants at one time but the number sometimes reached up to 60 and continued for hours at a time, Engressia testified.

One of the conference members was known as "Capt. Crunch." He took the name from a cereal box from which he got a whistle that happened to produce a 2,600-cycle tone, he said.

The 2,600-cycle tone was used to bypass billing equipment.

Engressia described a "phone freak" as a person with a compulsion to talk on

the telephone, sometimes using intricate, illegal methods to avoid paying for calls.

Engressia was arrested in 1971 for his illegal telephone activities and later went to work for an independent phone company.

During a recess Thursday, he told reporters the methods he used in 1971 to bypass telephone billing equipment are still effective.

"But it's against federal law and they've been cracking down on it."

The government maintains Henny used the conference circuit to inflate the number of long distance calls while a study of the volume of traffic on his circuits was under way.

Other phone companies paid Henny's company a proportion of long distance phone charges originating on Whidbey Island lines. The more calls made, the more money his company

received.

"He (Henny) said to get on it as much as we wanted — to keep it busy and we certainly did," said Engressia.

The trial was to resume Monday.