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Bibliographic Cover Sheet

Title           **The Whistler and the Captain -- Veterans of Phone 'Fixing'**

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Abstract       Article compares and contrasts the histories of The Whistler and Captain Crunch.

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# The Whistler and the Captain

## -Veterans of Phone 'Fixing'

Oddly enough, one of the redoubtable phone freaks of yesterday now works for A.T.&T: Joe (The Whistler) Engressia, blind since birth, has perfect pitch. He can whistle the 2,600-cycle tone used by blue boxes to make long-distance calls free. Blue-box tones must be within 2 percent of accuracy to succeed, and their owners used to call up The Whistler and have him tune their boxes by ear.

Mr. Engressia says that since the age of 4, he only wanted to learn more about the phone company and some day to work for it. At first, he had no luck. Then he found out about the 2,600-cycle tones and blue boxes, and he figured that if he got arrested the attention would land him a job.

"You can say a lot of nice things and not get a mule to move," he says. "Then you can hit it over the head a couple of times with a 2-by-4 and it will start running. I decided to have my whistle be the 2-by-4."

### A Call to Moscow

He tipped off the phone company that he'd be making some blue-box calls. He dialed the American Embassy in Moscow. A guard answered. Mr. Engressia said he was a disk jockey from a San Francisco radio station, and the listening public was just wondering how it felt to be out there, all alone, in Russia.

The guard explained, at length. Mr. Engressia got thrown into jail.

The Whistler continued to call A.T.&T. people and alert them to

problems he discovered in their system. It ultimately paid off. Last year, Mountain Bell hired him in Denver as a problem analyst.

Now 28, The Whistler says, "I feel the Bell insignia on my jacket and I think I'm the luckiest person on earth."

The best-known phone freak is Captain Crunch, more properly known as John Draper. He picked up the nickname because he started out using a whistle from a Cap'n Crunch cereal box that happened to emit a perfect 2,600-cycle tone. He moved far past that.

### Four Months in Jail

The Captain — as he likes to be called — was arrested twice in California. He served four months in jail and is on probation. Not long ago, he was arrested on phone-fraud charges in Pennsylvania. He professes innocence.

Mr. Draper, 35 says he no longer consort with other phone freaks.

Now, he lives in New York's SoHo district and bills himself as a telecommunications consultant to small businesses. Hire him, he says, and he'll slice your phone bill (legally). He has no phone of his own. He's afraid of phones. He worries that a friend will make an illegal call and get him in trouble. He's a big patron of pay phones, and he insists he plunks real coins in them like anyone else.

The Whistler and the Captain used to chat a lot. The Captain still oc-



United Press International

Joe "The Whistler" Engressia

asionally calls The Whistler for old times' sake.

"Now and then," The Whistler says, "I'll tell him, 'Hey Captain, how does it feel to be this one man against the might of the great Bell System?' The Captain will pause, feeling good, then say, 'Well, sometimes it's scary, but somebody's got to do it.'"