



# ***Exploding The Phone***

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Abstract	Overview of phone phreaking. Discusses Captain Crunch and his arrest. Interviews Bill Moorefield, Joe Engressia, and Bill Acker. Discusses Ray Oklahoma and the Ramparts article, blue boxes, loop arounds, red boxes, and credit card fraud. Mentions Al Bell and YIPL.
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# UPS NEWS SERVICE

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HAPPINESS IS A BLUE BOX

BY R. Volvox

Underground Press Syndicate

Phone phreaking is a rapidly-growing sport among the radical left, and even among a few with more conservative viewpoints. There are few rules to the game, and your opponent can be either the phone company and what it represents, or just the computers. The chance of arrest provides the kick.

A few phreaks have gotten the boot. John Draper was arrested in July and accused of being Captain Crunch, the famous phone phreak electronic genius. Draper, an electronics engineer, allegedly schemed to defraud the telephone company by "causing to be transmitted by wire signals to enter the long-distance circuits to avoid lawful charges from April 27 to May 1." His trial has been set for Nov. 28 in San Jose, Cal. He faces a possible five years and/or \$10,000 fine.

Captain Crunch, one of the older phreaks, took his name from the discovery that the whistle given away in Captain Crunch cereals several years ago plays the triggering frequency to connect into long-distance toll-free circuits. Crunch is supposed to have a van jammed with electronic equipment which can be backed up to a phone booth to make free phone calls to any place in the world. He claims to have better equipment than the phone company.

But no matter how much Draper has used phones in the past, he won't say much over them now. He and his lawyer are going over the case when I call. Paranoia flashes as he consults his lawyer on each of my questions, finally handing him the phone. But John picks it up again a few moments later when I ask him about his life and hard times.

"I worked in electronics in the service, and when I got out I used my service experience to get a job as an electronics engineer," he says. "But then inflation threw me out of a job. I spent two years looking for another. I just had too much time on my hands."

Bill Moorefield, 22 years old, is facing 25 years and/or \$5000 on five felony counts. He was picked up outside the YIP office in Miami Beach just before the Democratic Convention.

Where John was reticent to talk, Bill is more than willing. And then, a prearranged meeting netted him several of the felony counts. With a slight Southern drawl he explains that one of the charges came after talking with an operator about new tones. "I got to talking with her, and she was friendly, so I told her about the tones. In fact, I played her tapes of them."

Moorefield has been involved in radical politics and phone phreaking for some time. He was thrown out of the army a couple of years ago, then got busted in Atlanta for phreaking.

After being busted in July, he was picked up again between conventions in his home town in South Carolina by the State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) and the phone company. "Remember me from Miami?" asked one agent. They threatened to put him in jail for years for installing an extension phone for a friend, but "if you'll cooperate, we won't bust you. Are there any assassinations planned in Miami?"

They had him on their WATS line (on which free calls can be placed) for days calling Miami. "I called Jeff Nightbyrd, then tried to get Abbie. When I couldn't find him, SLED called down

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to one of the phone company agents in a car to find out where he was. They called back to say Abbie had dropped out of sight for four days."

Moorefield says Bell Telephone's intelligence unit is extremely efficient. "I bought for a black box in a Radio Shack store a year ago under the name George Metesky from New York City. They knew about it." He says the FBI was in on his investigation. "Maybe they're pissed at me because I used to bill calls to the FBI's credit card number."

His voice grows excited as he describes his latest project. "I'm working on a voice scrambler. There are so many taps on so many lines that phone phreaks will have to start using scramblers real soon." He gives me the numbers of some other phreaks before I hang up.

Joe Engressia is blind, but he is known to phone phreaks as the number one authority on North American phreaking.

I introduce myself and Joe gives me a few blue box chirps. "But I'm not making free calls any more, now that I'm working for the Millington Telephone Co.," he says. "It's not worth it any more. I value my job too much."

I ask him about people the phone company has harassed. "Well, the guy who wrote the Ramparts article on black boxes was busted only weeks later on 26 counts of felony," he says. "He pleaded guilty to four of them and got five years probation. That's the highest probation I've heard of for any crime."

"And then there's this company in Dallas that was selling blue boxes for \$3000 to businesses, saying they were undetectable. Several of the company officers were picked up."

I ask Joe if he really is number one. "That's what everybody tells me," he replies, obviously pleased. "I was M-Fing (using a multifrequency blue box) in the early '60's. When I met phone phreaks, it was like opening up a new world. The phone was a shaping force on my whole life."

"But I couldn't get a job. I applied at several phone companies; I wanted to work around phones. Finally I got myself arrested for phreaking. I got five job offers that week."

"I was just in London," he says proudly. "Independent TV wanted to do an interview with me on how blue boxes work." His voice grows awed. "I even met a member of Parliament on the show."

I mention fake credit cards. "I think it's unethical," he pronounces. "The biggest thing is that it affects an operator's billing index. The operator gets fired if too many uncollectable calls are made through her. Boxing doesn't do that. You're outwitting totally automatic equipment. It's the human element."

I ask Joe about politics and he replies quickly, "A few years ago I was really conservative. But now I've swung the other way because of the phone company's behavior toward phone phreaks. Jails just are not correctional."

Joe continues on another vein. "Feel free to publish my number." (It's (901) 872-0780.) "I really like getting calls." Then he whistles me off (Joe has perfect pitch) and I hear the connection breaking down and finally the deadness of the dial tone.

Bill Acker, also blind but known among phone phreaks as the overseas switching expert, has been hassled too. He doesn't phreak any more.

"The phone company confiscated a lot of my equipment and put me on manual service," he says angrily. "Now I get an operator instead of a dial tone. The company even came down to the school I go to and harassed the officials there."

"I was never prosecuted," he continues. "Anyone who's afraid of being arrested shouldn't be phone phreaking."

I ask about switching systems. "First of all," he responds, "that thing Crunch said in Esquire about three phreaks tying up the entire phone system just isn't true. There are too many trunks, and it's impossible to know which are busy already. But the phone company keeps the rumor alive for public hysteria by not confirming or denying it. They figure they can get more support for harsh sentences for phreaks if the public considers them a danger to the country."

But why do phreaks do it?

Why does anyone do it? "We get satisfaction out of it. Why, there are six countries -- Ireland, Austria, South Korea, Indonesia, Bahrain and Kuwait -- which operators can't dial but phone phreaks can!"

Bill won't use phony credit cards either. "It's unethical to bill to someone else's phone," he states. He closes by suggesting I read Monopoly, Joseph Goulden's book on Bell Telephone.

I call a couple more phone phreaks who have been harassed. Jim was blackmailed by Bell. "A special agent of the company came to where I work and threatened to talk to my boss if I

didn't talk," he says, righteously angered. "He admitted tapping my phone for six months and forced me to sign papers against another party against my will." Later Bell contacted him about John Draper.

Jack was about to graduate from college when the same agent contacted him. "He said I wouldn't prosecute me if I would sign a statement. But I had talked to Jim after the agent had been to see him, so I wouldn't sign it," Jack says. "The next night he called and threatened to go to the Dean of Men. I hung up on him.

"The company is scared, but they're a law breaker as well -- they tap phones illegally."

A couple of months ago American Telephone and Telegraph and the FBI announced a nationwide crackdown on phone phreaks. Then in October they announced they had been successful -- they arrested 14 blue-boxers, a record number, during September. But the 14 were very straight businessmen and white-collar executives, not freaks.

And the real phreaks continue their fight to beat Ma Bell out of fares. They are uncovering new ways of ripping off the phone company every day. Mute boxes, also known as black boxes, allow phreaks to receive calls for free and are probably one of the safest methods of phreaking. Friends often arrange signals, calling themselves person-to-person or calling collect. Parts for the boxes cost only \$4. Ray Oklahoma outlined construction in the June '72 Ramparts, but only the 50,000 copies mailed to subscribers and a few quickly-purchased newsstand copies are available. Most of the newsstand copies were withdrawn after AT&T threatened to sue.

The blue box, also known as a multi-frequency box, enables phreaks to place outgoing free calls. An M-Fer dials an 800 (toll-free) number which connects into a tandem, a phone company connection. The M-Fer seizes the tandem with a 2600-cycle tone. The 800 number stops ringing and the M-Fer signals a series of double-frequency tones to complete the call, free. A blue box with 13 buttons can signal calls anywhere in the United States and to many other countries, but for overseas work it should have 16.

The loop or loop-around is a set of two consecutive phone numbers which the phone company uses as toll-free test lines. If two people each call one of the numbers they can talk to each other. Ma Bell shuts down loops almost as fast as they are discovered.

Conference lines are a whole set of numbers which can be called by as many people as there are numbers, providing a giant thinktank for phone phreaks. Some can be direct-dialed, others require a blue box. The telephone company shuts these down quickly too, but phone phreaks seem to be good at convincing disgruntled engineers to set up new ones.

The red box, detailed in the October '72 Ramparts, emits a 2200-cycle tone to fool the new one-slot pay phones into thinking the red-boxer has paid for the call.

Then there are fake credit card numbers, telling the operator you lost a dime in a pay phone, a paperclip method for free pay phone calls on General Telephone equipment and many more. The best source for all of it is the Youth International Party Line (152 W. 42 St., Room 504, New York, N.Y. 10036. Twelve months for \$2). YIPL has covered all the above plus information on hooking up additional extensions, installing equipment to "conference" a call, the latest credit card codes and hundreds of ways to make free pay phone calls. Edited by phone phreak Al Bell, YIPL has published the plans and tones for blue boxes and the plans for the mute box.

After John Draper was seized, YIPL set up the Cap'n Crunch Defense Fund to help with the legal fees and bail caused by "such obviously political telephone busts".

YIPL believes the Bell System is an inhuman "profit gobbler" accumulating and securing power under which "people are being slaughtered all in the name of money". And since we give the phone company money we are at fault. So it's time to stop paying.

#### SPIRIT OF '76

NEW YORK (UPS) -- The Bicentennial Corp. has devised what it considers a novel approach to the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the American Revolution. To kick off a benefit Dec. 4, the group invited 1776 guests who will pay \$17.76 per person (\$117.76 per couple for patrons for a special showing of the movie "1776" at Radio City Music Hall. Guests are invited to wear red, white and blue.

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