

Then the security agents learned that Joe was planning one of his phone trips to a local switching office. The security people planted one of their agents in the switching office. He posed as a student switchman and followed Joe around on a tour. He was extremely friendly and helpful to Joe, leading him around the office by the arm. When the tour was over he offered Joe a ride back to his apartment house. On the way he asked Joe -- one tech man to another -- about "those blue boxers" he'd heard about. Joe talked about them freely, talked about his blue box freely, and about all the other things he could do with the phones.

The next day the phone-company security agents slapped a monitoring tape on Joe's line, which eventually picked up an illegal call. Then they applied for the search warrant and broke in.

In court Joe pleaded not guilty to possession of a blue box and theft of service. A sympathetic judge reduced the charges to malicious mischief and found him guilty on that count, sentenced him to two thirty-day sentences to be served concurrently and then suspended the sentence on condition that Joe promise never to play with phones again. Joe promised, but the phone company refused to restore his service. For two weeks after the trial Joe could not be reached except through the pay phone at his apartment house, and the landlord screened all calls for him.

Phone-phreak Carl managed to get through to Joe after the trial, and reported that Joe sounded crushed by the whole affair.

"What I'm worried about," Carl told me, "is that Joe means it this time. The promise. That he'll never phone-phreak again. That's what he told me, that he's given up phone-phreaking for good. I mean his entire life. He says he knows they're going to be watching him so closely for the rest of his life he'll never be able to make a move without going straight to jail. He sounded very broken up by the whole experience of being in jail. It was awful to hear him talk that way. I don't know. I hope maybe he had to sound that way. Over the phone, you know."

He reports that the entire phone-phreak underground is up in arms over the phone company's treatment of Joe. "All the while Joe had his hopes pinned on his application for a phone-company job, they were stringing him along getting ready to bust him. That gets me mad. Joe spent most of his time helping them out. The bastards. They think they can use him as an example. All of sudden they're harassing us on the coast. Agents are jumping up on our lines. They just busted -----'s mute yesterday and ripped out his lines. But no matter what Joe does, I don't think we're going to take this lying down."

Two weeks later my phone rings and about eight phone phreaks in succession say hello from about eight different places in the country, among them Carl, Ed, and Captain Crunch. A nationwide phone-phreak conference line has been reestablished through a switching machine in -----, with the cooperation of a disgruntled switchman.

"We have a special guest with us today," Carl tells me.

The next voice I hear is Joe's. He reports happily that he has just moved to a place called Millington, Tennessee, fifteen miles outside of Memphis, where he has been hired as a telephone-set repairman by a small independent phone company. Someday he hopes to be an equipment troubleshooter.

"It's the kind of job I dreamed about. They found out about me from the publicity surrounding the trial. Maybe Ma Bell did me a favor busting me. I'll have telephones in my hands all day long."

"You know the expression, 'Don't get mad, get even'?" phone-phreak Carl asked me. "Well, I think they're going to be very sorry about what they did to Joe and what they're trying to do to us."

151. The History of British Phreaking by Lex Luthor

Note: The British post office, is the US equivalent of Ma Bell. In Britain, phreaking goes back to the early fifties, when the technique of 'toll a drop back' was discovered. Toll a was an exchange near St.Pauls which routed calls between London and nearby non-London exchanges. The trick was to dial an unallocated number, and then depress the receiver-rest for « second. This flashing initiated the 'clear forward' signal, leaving the caller with an open line into the toll a exchange. They could then dial 018, which forwarded him to the trunk exchange at that time, the first long distance exchange in Britain and follow it with the code for the distant exchange to which he would be connected at no extra charge.

The signals needed to control the UK network today were published in the "Institution of Post Office Engineers Journal" and reprinted in the Sunday times (15 Oct. 1972).

The signaling system they use: Signaling system No.3 uses pairs of frequencies selected from 6 tones separated by 120hz. With that info, the phreaks made "bleepers" or as they are called here in the US "blue box", but they do utilize different MF tones than the US, thus, your US blue box that you smuggled into the UK will not work, unless you change the frequencies.

In the early seventies, a simpler system based on different numbers of pulses with the same frequency (2280hz) was used. For more info on that, try to get a hold of: Atkinson's "Telephony and Systems Technology".

In the early days of British phreaking, the Cambridge university Titan computer was used to record and circulate numbers found by the exhaustive dialing of local networks. These numbers were used to create a chain of links from local exchange to local exchange across the