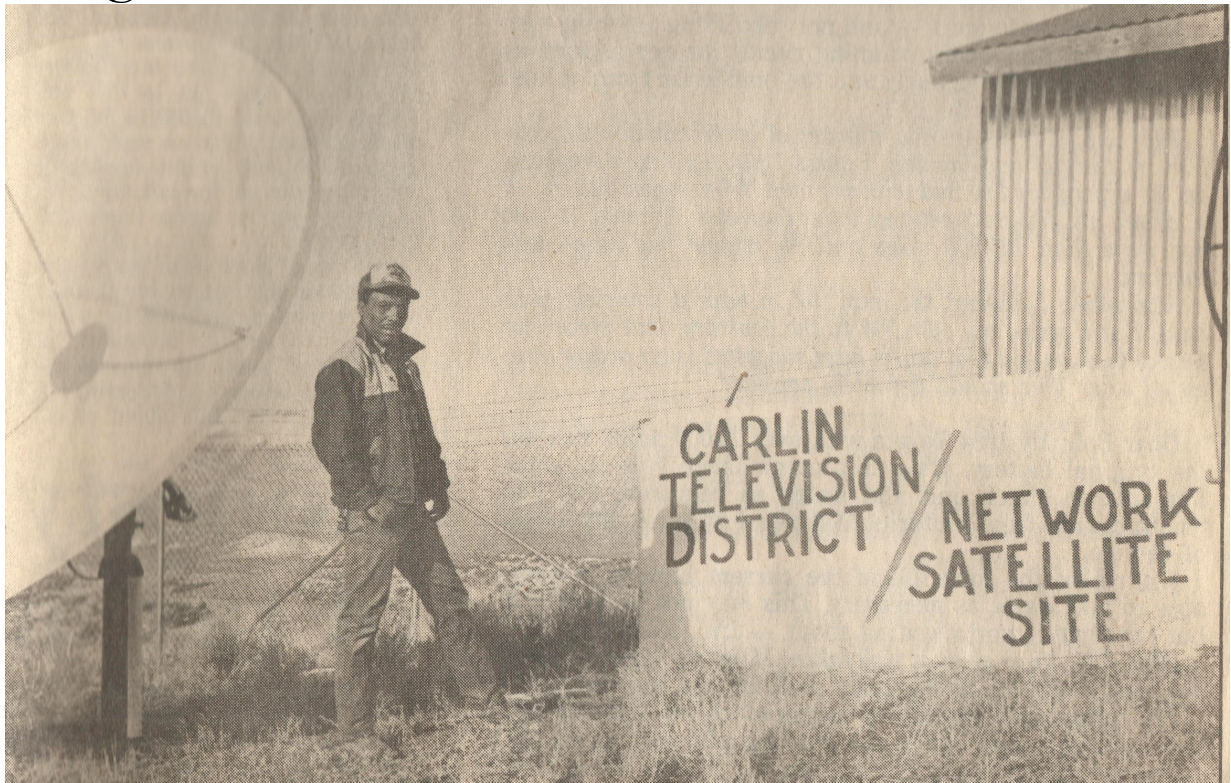


# DESERT DUST

*Carlin Historical Society - Carlin, Nevada*

## Bring on the Boob Tube

WRITTEN BY ELLA B. TRUJILLO



We often think of television as something that just is. In fact, with the movement to “cut the cord” it is possible that traditional television might become a thing of the past. It is certainly true that antennae are a thing of the past. If you drive through Carlin today and look at the roofs of the houses and buildings (especially older buildings) you might glimpse poles that bristle like porcupines. At one time these “contraptions” were necessary for one to watch the “boob tube” each evening. But, first there must be a signal for the antenna to get. The story of how television was brought to Carlin varies. One telling says a slick salesman sold the town on the equipment necessary for television reception but delivered nothing but “wires and aluminum foil wrapped and folded to make an antenna”.

The con man was apparently given \$10,000 which came directly out of the pockets of most of Carlin's citizens. Another tale says that in the summer of 1956, Mario Isola raised a TV antenna 50 feet above his roof and picked up some images with it. All the while, he prayed that Nevada's winds wouldn't blow it down. Soon, all of Carlin was abuzz with the possibility that they could get something. So, several townsfolk, mostly members of the Carlin Volunteer Fire Department, started collecting donations. Apparently, almost everyone in town donated and at least \$10,000 was raised. A location was chosen on Swales Mountain for the equipment and almost all the work was completed by locals. It took a lot of work. A description by an unknown author helps to understand what the undertaking consisted of.

"The County loaned a flat-bed truck and old buildings were hauled in from God-knows-where, including an old abandoned S.P. "Chic Sale" which became the shelter for the diesel generator. Rancher Bob Hadley loaned a tractor and donated a small generator. Horses were used to pack water, cement, sand & gravel, and dynamite to the site. A 2000-foot power line was strung on donated poles. (Sno, ice & and storm broke down the line the first winter, and additional poles had to be installed to carry the load!) Harry Cornelius was powder man and blasted bases for 5 antennae, and a 20' x 8' hole which was filled with scrap copper & and salt for the essential "ground".

Even after the original construction was completed in 1958, it was going to be necessary to maintain the equipment. Maintenance would require incoming revenue and a salary for the help. Fortunately, in 1957, Eureka had helped to have a state law passed that allowed for the formation of a "television district". So, in 1959, the Carlin Television District was created. The original Board consisted of Mike Bennet, Tex Covington, Frank Batt, Bill Player, and Mario Isola. An annual "fee" began to be collected from the households in Carlin and Claude Troupe (an employee of the City's power plant) who was familiar with power generators was hired to maintain the equipment. Problems continued to plague the new service but eventually things evened out. In 1997, a Carlin resident could pay an annual payment of \$36 and get a total of 15 television channels. The Television District continued to exist into the 2000s, thanks to the work of men like Howard Wright (pictured on page 1) and Will Johnston, who both served as presidents of the TV Board. Alas, technology changes, satellite television and streaming services wait for no man or in this case, television district.

*On the right is a picture of the fire department that helped bring television to Carlin.*

*News and Gossip*  
**UPCOMING EVENTS**  
**TEA TIME TALKS - NEW START TIME**  
**IS 5:00 P.M.**  
**HAUNTED CEMETERY TOUR ON OCTOBER**  
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