



Face of Fillmore

*By Sherry Shepard
March 17, 2021*

The Face of Fillmore this week looks at a colorful character from Utah's past, described as a "gregarious entrepreneur". Although not a local resident, he made his mark on remote areas of Utah and Nevada. He even "dropped in" occasionally in Millard County. Art Brothers is one of those unusual types who inspires tales of conquering the West, the type movies are made about.

A not-so-distant cousin sent me Art's obituary along with some of his life story. To Rick Hansen, I say "thank you" for sharing this information. Rick actually heard of many of Art's adventures from his deer hunting days in Northwest Utah. For a time, one of Rick's cousins on the other side of his family worked for Art as a lineman using an airplane. He quit partly because he kept getting stuck in the mud on the side of the highway when he landed and also didn't get paid much for the danger he faced.

Now I am getting ahead of myself.

According to his obituary, Arthur Wellington Weart Brothers passed away March 30, 2016 after a "very full life, very well lived."

He was born in 1930 in Salt Lake to Hilda Von Erxleben and Arthur Weart. His parents separated when he was very young, and his mother gave him up for adoption. He was later adopted by Harrison and Dorothy Brothers. He attended Granite High in Salt Lake and joined the Air Force at 17 where he trained as a radio machine and served in the Korean War, being awarded the Bronze Star. After 5 years in the military, he entered the University of Utah, then worked in Manhattan and Los Angeles. He built the radio telephone system for boaters on Lake Mead and became aware of the communication needs of rural areas.

Eventually he and his young wife Tina moved to Grouse Creek where he began his telephone service to rural parts of Utah and Nevada. Art created it all out of nothing but lots of hard work and parts he found in assorted places, like wire he got from the military surplus and switching equipment from another telephone company. He hand-built the original long-distance line, climbing the poles, building cross pieces and stringing the wire until Grouse Creek had telephone service. He then used that knowledge to expand to other communities that were also in need. He was able to serve hard-to-get to places in very rural areas because he did much of the line work himself, making spare parts he personally crafted and flying in his small plane to remote locations.



Art Brothers

It was that kind of activity that got him in trouble with the local law enforcement. He had the habit of landing on out-of-the way highways. He was even known to have hit a couple of cars during his landings.

His airplane was confiscated one time in Millard County as he landed on a highway then taxied to a nearby gas station and fueled up his plane.

Sheriff Ed Phillips said, "I kind of sympathize with the small businessman to a degree. He needs his airplane to get around, but we couldn't let him continue landing on the road."

According to the account I read, Brothers sneaked into the impound lot, taxied the plane around some barricades and flew away.

The last time Sheriff Phillips had to explain the problem to him, he had landed in Garrison and taxied to his office. The sheriff had the road department use a dump truck to blockade in the plane until he could get there to have a heart-to-heart talk with Brothers.

My cousin included an account by David Irvine, a former PSC commissioner. He said Mountain Bell's lawyers "went nuts" over the moneymaking scheme Art concocted involving Santa Claus. Mountain Bell had to pay Beehive Telephone thousands of dollars in long distance interconnect fees from the customers Art's company was licensed to serve.

"Art was able to secure the number 12345678," Irvine said. "That was before you had to punch in the area code, so hitting 1 would automatically make it a long-distance call. He then put a recording on that line from Santa Claus to all the little boys and girls.

"Kids often punched numbers in sequence while playing on the phone and then got Santa Claus," Irvine said. "So, they would call the number over and over again. And each time, it was money in Art's pocket because Mountain Bell had to pay him the long-distance fees. And Mountain Bell would get all the complaints because the long-distance charges would show up on their bill.

Today his company is known as Beehive Broadband and employs about 50 people.

Art Brothers' life became legendary for its inventiveness and resourcefulness.