ON reaching our 50th anniversary, we could say that, through the devotion and farsightedness of our founders and employees, we have emerged from a visionary dream into a vivid reality. . . .

We could mention that during the past 50 years we have weathered the onslaughts of three terrible depressions and the restrictions and horrors of two of the world’s costliest and bloodiest wars. . . .

If we chose, we could recall how we met the challenge of would-be telephone companies seeking to acquire financing and public patronage and how it required a decade for us to win that battle. . . .

For nearly 20 years, we have fought the cravings of the selfish who want to interfere with our American way of life through the radical modification of our free-enterprise system. As a company and as individuals, we are still fighting this battle. . . .

We could remind our users how the Peninsular Company has provided up-to-date telephone service by utilizing the most modern equipment available; how we were the first in the country to furnish completely automatic service to a large city; and how we were dial operated throughout our entire system at a time when less than 40 percent of the country’s telephone users enjoyed similar convenience. . . .

But most of all, our employees and management share the great pride in having withstood the test of time and the challenge of constantly changing conditions to serve the independent telephone industry and the public for the past half a century.
THE FIRST TEN YEARS 1901-1911

W. G. Brorein, a state senator from Columbus, Ohio, came to Florida in February, 1901, to explore the possibility of obtaining telephone franchises in the thinly-populated but promising West Coast area. Satisfied with what he saw, Mr. Brorein was granted a 30-year franchise in Tampa, then a community of some 20,000 people.

The Peninsular Telephone Company's application for a charter was approved in March, 1901, and the company was organized with a capital stock of $225,000, which was increased to $400,000 before the first call was placed over the infant system. Mr. Brorein was elected president, at a salary of $110 a month, and immediately set out on an expansion drive.

Biggest news of 1901 was the assassination of President William McKinley, who was succeeded by a young ex-cavalry officer Theodore Roosevelt. But good news to the West Coast was Peninsular's purchase of the Palmetto and Bradenton exchanges and the building of offices in Plant City, Lakeland, Mulberry, and Bartow.

Little did these early Peninsular employees realize that they were posing for a historic photograph. This was the company's first piece of operating equipment, located in the Bradenton exchange. Although Peninsular was first given a franchise in Tampa, the system's first calls were placed over Bradenton and Palmetto facilities, which had a total of 100 telephones when purchased.

Almon B. Strowger, inventor of automatic telephone equipment that was to someday supplant "Central," died in retirement in St. Petersburg, May 26, 1902. Although he took out three major patents on his dial telephone, his own plan never materialized, and Strowger failed to achieve the world-wide fame he deserved.

A large part of the Tampa Peninsular employees of 1902 piled on their float to ride in the Labor Day Parade. At that time, there were two competing telephone systems in Tampa, making it necessary for local businessmen to subscribe for service with both our company and its competitor. A few more than 300 telephones were then in operation.
On Tampa's Franklin Street, this cable crew laid the first underground cable in the city's history. A short time later the company established a branch office in Ybor City and constructed toll lines to Bartow through Plant City. All traveling was done by horse and wagon as the automobile and improved roads were unknown.

In 1904, Peninsular acquired the St. Petersburg, Clearwater, and Tarpon Springs exchanges. The total price, which included all facilities and the 120 telephones then in operation, was $3800. This early picture of the St. Petersburg switchroom shows employees working at night by the eerie light of incandescent lamps.

This Peninsular crew of 1906 was busy meeting the booming demand for telephones. Bell had sold out to Peninsular in 1906, the first instance of the former selling to an independent telephone company. Our company had already outgrown the 700-line common battery switchboard which some had claimed was "too ambitious" for the small town of Tampa.

Toward the close of the company's first 10 years, Peninsular fathers realized that the old manual switchboard, above, would have to be replaced. The common-battery system installed in 1902, had depreciated greatly because of the Florida climate and had become practically obsolete.

Mr. Brorein stands proudly before Peninsular's first home, a two-room office in the Roberts Building at the corner of Zack Street and Florida Avenue in Tampa. Until the main switchboard was installed in 1902, one small board handled all long-distance calls over the toll lines that were then completed.

So it was in the early days of the company. Many insisted the telephone was no more than a gadget and, like that "crazy" automobile, would soon pass from the scene. But Peninsular's founders weren't easily disillusioned, even with the many hardships of the company's infancy. They saw with clear vision the possibilities for a thriving telephone system under independent management in this area.
We Grow in Wartime—
1912-1918

1. Dressed in the "high fashion" of 1912, these early graduates of Peninsular's traffic school line up for their commencement picture. From the beginning, the company has specialized in preparing untrained workers for useful employment in the telephone industry. The program has been broadened to include formal or on-the-job training for all employees.

2. Mr. Broedin realized that the Tampa office on Zack Street was too small and he began looking for a suitable site for the permanent home of the company. This old picture, looking south on Morgan Street from the railroad past the old DeSoto Hotel, shows the lot he selected.

3. Outgrowing the small Zack Street office in Tampa, Mr. Broedin obtained additional financing and Peninsular moved into its new home, a modern, four-story structure on Morgan Street. The opening celebration for the new building was overshadowed by a feature that made Tampa's telephone service unique among cities of its size.

4. In the Spring of 1914, after much study, experimentation and work, Tampa was cut over to completely automatic service, thus becoming the first city of its size in the nation to accomplish the feat. The new dial equipment was placed in the new building, and telephone users were happy—except for some war clouds gathering in Europe.

5. World War I brought all telephone companies under government supervision and Post Office Department operation. Mr. Broedin, father of our company, was appointed Director of Independent Telephone Companies in Florida. Under his wartime direction the number of stations grew from 8,160 to a high of almost 20,000, despite the war.
6 Here is the company's first formal parade float. Entered in Tampa's Gasparilla parade of 1914 and filled with Peninsula's prettiest operators, the float was one of the high spots of the annual celebration. Two years later, after converting to dial, the float, still horse drawn, depicted a massive dial.

7 Long-distance service was inaugurated between Tampa and Jacksonville during this period. Two operators in high-button shoes and other high fashion of the day handled all of Tampa's toll calls except during rush periods. Long-distance service had already been established within the system—between Tampa, Plant City, Bartow, Lakeland, Bradenton, and Palmetto.

8 Carl D. Brorein, Peninsula's president-to-be, served his country during the war with no thought of the position he was to hold some twenty years later. As a captain in the Marine Air Corps stationed in the Azores for two years, he piloted a seaplane on anti-submarine duty in the surrounding waters.

9 This 1890 photograph shows the land office building which housed Winter Haven's first telephone switching office. In 1917, Peninsula purchased the Winter Haven and Auburndale properties. The picture was taken from West Central and Fourth Avenue (Atlantic Coast Line Depot) looking West toward Lake Howard.

10 Ringed-top poles like this one served all the stations in a block. Sometimes there would be 20 or more drops radiating in all directions from a 10-foot pole located strategically in the block. Some time later each block had several terminals on lower poles, from which shorter drops were utilized. This is a New Port Richey scene.

11 When beef steak hit a new high of 15 cents a pound during this period, consumers complained that "the good old days" would never return again. At that time Tampa residence telephone rates were $2.00 a month. In 1941, steak sells for 1.00 a pound and more, but some telephone rates in our area are as low as $2.35 plus tax.
1. Peninsular started this period with less than 20,000 telephones in operation, but boom-time prosperity and the repurchase of the St. Petersburg exchange below, for 100 times the 1906 selling price brought the station total to more than 10,000 by 1927. Also the Lake Wales, Haines City, and Frostproof exchanges were bought and the New Port Richey and Venice offices were built.

2. Although this period was the “Roaring Twenties” for most of the country, people in the Peninsular-serviced area might well have called this era the “Dial Decade.” With less than 10 percent of the country’s telephones dial operated, Peninsular cut over the Plant City, Clearwater, St. Petersburg, Sarasota, Bradenton, Lakeland, Ybor, Hyde Park, Seminole, and Tarpon Springs exchanges to automatic service.

3. Sunday afternoon traffic in 1921 kept these two long-distance operators on their toes. They are Edith Lewis (Bush) and Lillian Haley (Snow). The six-position toll board had been installed recently and every spot was filled on weekdays when traffic loads were at their peak.

4. Tampa linemen posed for this picture before their modern vehicle in the Fall of 1924. Peninsular oldtimers will recognize O. Doon, W. M. Goff, James Arnold, J. R. Harmon, “Shorty” Hall, and “Slim” Anderson. During this year, Peninsular gained 6,000 stations, or as many as it had accumulated in the first six years of its existence.

5. Tampa’s chief operator, Mrs. Floy MacDuffie, third from left, graduated from the traffic school in 1921. Under the direction of Birdo Riley, center wearing glasses, the company turned out operators at a fast clip. Although manual operation gave way to local “dial” service 10 years before, Peninsular hired more operators than ever, because of the upswing in long-distance phoning.

6. One big factor plagued Peninsular all through the “boom” years: A sudden and tremendous increase in the population on the Florida West Coast demanded service the company was unable to furnish. Here company officials watch as workmen push through a cable-laying job on a Tampa street in 1921, as part of a multi-thousand dollar expansion drive.
7 This clock toll board was installed in St. Petersburg as part of the company's modernization campaign. Notice the old-style calcolagraph, left. All these employees, including chief operator Irma Andrews, standing, are still with Peninsular. The chart shows that St. Petersburg averaged 100 long-distance calls a day, but in 1911, 4,000 calls from St. Petersburg is considered a "fair" day.

8 A "Flapper Girl" bathing beauty contest caused many a lifted eyebrow and whistle—silent, of course—on the beach in 1925. The judges, restrained from their "hooch" and denied a "Charleston" tryout with the contestants, selected "Miss St. Pete Traffic," girl with bow on cap, by sight only. She's now Mrs. Catherine Dewitt, St. Petersburg.

9 Emergency shifts rushed repairs after a disastrous fire in the St. Petersburg switchroom in 1926. The holocaust followed a severe tropical hurricane, which caused electric wires to fall on telephone wires. Strong current burned the central office mechanisms, and the resulting service interruption, one week, was the longest in Peninsular's history.

10 For the second time in a quarter century, Peninsular outgrew its office space, despite the pessimists' claims in 1901 and again in 1914, that the company founders were too hopeful of the future of Florida's West Coast. This 12-story structure was built in 1926, alongside the four-story building. Choice office space was leased to several tenants and new telephone equipment was purchased.

11 On Feb. 17, 1927, W. G. Brorein placed the first trans-Atlantic call made from the Peninsular system. He spoke with an American Telephone and Telegraph Company representative in London. Since this history-making call was some years before the widespread home use of the radio, people in our area marveled at the accomplishment.

12 President Brorein, founder of the company, laid the cornerstone of the new building several years after the structure's completion. Previously, he had been too busy with the rush of rapid expansion to cement the stone in place. About this time a slight dent in our "boom" economy was seen by astute economists, but the setback was considered minor.

13 Although some speculators pushed the inflation trend higher and higher, men with foresight and determination continued to build their futures on firm ground. Peninsular and its officials were in this latter group. The company provided service to meet the needs of the community and at the same time avoided over-expansion.
1929-1938

Comfortably housed in its spacious new building, the company found little expansion necessary as it was faced with a declining station total—and revenue. Advances in service were made anyway; exchanges were cut to dial telephone lines were used to establish a storm warning service, and our facilities brought in network radio programs.

All through the depression years, the company was beset with a continuing loss of subscribers—and a resulting decline in revenue, but we "rode out" the depression successfully. In 1933, the company hit the low point of some 33,000 stations. The next few years brought a steady increase in the total until, on the eve of World War II, we had recovered all of our station losses.

Carl D. Breoin, nephew of the company founder, was named Peninsular president and general manager by the board of directors in 1938. "Mr. Carl" had served as general manager for a number of years prior to his appointment. Although he was beset by many troublesome problems, the company station total has tripled under his leadership.

Before the "terrible thirties" the company made the first recognition of faithful employees who had been with the company for five years or longer. W. G. Breoin awarded the first service pins, sketched by Earl Crum, a draftsman-employee, who won a contest to determine the emblem's design. Many familiar faces can be seen in this 1930 presentation ceremony.

W. G. Breoin died in 1937. His dream of establishing an independent telephone company which would bring up-to-date telephone service to this area at the lowest possible cost had been realized. The beloved telephone pioneer was known throughout the country as an able executive and an outstanding civic leader. He is shown here a year before his death receiving Peninsular's first 35-year service pin from Frank Jackson.

...Riding Out the...
Despite the "hard times" of the 1930s, Peninsular's toll equipment was more modern. This is a 1930 scene of the Tampa toll room. During this period, telephone work and subscriptions were frequent, long-distance was assigned "O," and low "Sunday rates" were segregated.

The SUN DIAL, Florida's smallest newspaper, was established and inserted with subscribers' bills in 1931. It explained many of the problems confronting the company and attempted to bring about a clearer understanding between customers and employees on vital questions of the day. The front page of the first issue is reproduced here.

From time to time, usually in the late summer or fall, our district is rocked by hurricanes which blow up from the Caribbeans, causing extensive damage to telephone facilities. One of our worst "blows" came in 1933, when telephone facilities were severely tested. Employees worked virtually around the clock to hold damage to a minimum and to restore service.

In 1934, Peninsular made available to its subscribers the "French" or hand-set telephones, thus becoming one of the first companies to install such equipment. The instrument's inventor, R. G. Brown, above, a longtime resident of St. Petersburg, died in that city 12 years later.

The Depression

Employees found the Credit Union, established in 1935, a safe, convenient—and profitable way to save their money. In time of need, low-interest loans became available. J. W. Manix, installation and maintenance supervisor, Tampa, was the Credit Union's first member. Here he is shown, see arrow, at one of the organization's recent annual meetings.

Four more Peninsular exchanges were cut to dial during this period, bringing automatic service to more than 95 percent of our subscribers at a time when less than 40 percent of the nation's telephones were dial operated. The Lake Wales, Winter Haven, and Haines City offices were all "cut over" before 1936. The Lake Wales office is shown here.
The company's house magazine HELLO! was born to fill the desire of our servicemen to keep up-to-date on the latest news back at Peninsular. The boys—and some girls too—learned where many of their fellow workers were fighting and that the home folks were still on the job. This early HELLO! cover was just one of the many ways in which we reminded workers to meet our war bond quota.

With a large number of our young men in service, Peninsular resorted to "girl power" to fill many jobs formerly held by men only. Many of these women performed so well during the emergency that they still hold their jobs in peacetime. These St. Petersburg girls delivered the 1943 telephone directories.

Almost 150 of our male employees, or about 10 percent, left their telephone jobs to assume a more direct role in winning the war. Our workers plowed through mud, flew the skies, and sailed the sea with every branch of the service on practically every country and ocean of the world. This created a critical labor shortage at Peninsular and forced the company to explore untapped labor fields.

A savings-pension plan, long a dream of our founder, was established in 1940. Combined with personal savings and compulsory social security, it provided a sustaining income for life, starting at age 65. James Arnold, Sr., who has taken advantage of the program, relaxes unworried in his easy chair, because of the retirement plan.

The W. G. Broerein Council of Telephone Pioneers of America was established in 1939, namesake of our late founder. Those employees with 21 years or more of telephone service are eligible for membership. This scene taken at the state convention in Ft. Myers is typical of the fellowship and revelry that prevails when Pioneers meet.
In response to pleas for civilian defense workers, these Tampa employees formed a fire and incendiary squad in 1943. They were ready in case of bombing or other disaster to quell fires and to give prompt first aid to possible victims. Fortunately their services were never needed, but they were trained for any eventuality.

With rationing in full swing, many employees spent what spare time they had after working extra shifts at Peninsular in growing "Victory Gardens." This not only provided recreation but paid off in the form of nutritious meals during a time of high prices and restrictions.

To keep Peninsular employees in top-notch health for their wartime job, the mobile health unit x-rayed all workers. This was the first such mass health drive in company history. Later reports were sent to employees telling them the condition of their chests.

The bulging Tampa warehouse stocks were reduced to almost nothing during the war years of equipment shortages. Despite these continuing difficulties, the company station total climbed from 51,897 at the end of 1939, to 83,201 on V-J Day. The ingenuity and determination of both labor and management to maintain telephone service for national defense were responsible for this record.

During this period, Peninsular began a health service to employees. Many could now receive first aid and be visited by a nurse when illness struck. Later a group hospitalization plan for employees and their dependents was inaugurated, relieving workers of the threat that illness would deprive them and their loved ones of their livelihood.

The joyous humor of the thirties was replaced with the higher pitched, rakish fun of the forties, as typified by this brassy wartime sketch. In many ways, the telephone business was like this cartoon. We weren't sure where we were going and we were stunned by the rules of wartime living.
After the war it became evident that the tremendous demand for telephones would hold up and that a costly expansion campaign would have to be undertaken as soon as equipment became available. Additional financing was secured to make the program possible. Equipment installation scenes above, soon became commonplace in all our exchanges.

The apprentice training program under direction of the company and representatives of labor was launched after the war to train returning veterans. The company qualified as a training agency under the G. I. Bill of Rights and has graduated 86 men since the program’s conception.

With the postwar return of the Florida State Fair, our annual exhibit was modernized. We attempted to explain our service problems to the public.

Spaghetti-like folds of wire began to appear all through the Peninsular system. Even with held orders being filled rapidly, the list of would-be subscribers continued to grow daily. Here an employee straightens the mass of wires to be connected to the main frame.

Peninsular installed its 100,000th telephone in Plant City in July, 1947, representing a 100 percent growth in eight years. Plant City Manager R. L. Meheffey looks on as subscriber Mrs. E. O. Hand, wife of a navy veteran, places the first call on the historic telephone.

The Sarasota exchange building was typical of the building program underway during the readjustment period. Annex, left, was added 1947.
In 1947, the last few manually-operated telephones in our system were cut over to automatic service. At New Port Richey exchange, below, last office to go “dial,” all local operators were transferred to Tarpon Springs for long-distance duty. At this time fewer than 60 percent of the country’s telephones were automatic.

Returning veterans gave Peninsular’s sports program a lift. Discontinued during the war, this Tampa softball team took to the field in 1948.

Much like the returned vet and his family, conditions were better by the end of 1948 than they were during the shortages of the war. But inflationary prices, which reached their peak at the end of this period, bit heavily into company finances just as it did the family budget. In fact, only a “coke” and a call still cost a nickel. We had not had a rate increase in 20 years.
典型的技术工程问题正困扰着Peninsular的员工。比如，1949年在萨拉索塔湾敷设4,300英尺的海底电缆。200对的电缆并没有像预期的那样铺设在三个或四个线轴上，而是卷成一个56,729磅的线轴。员工的智慧和力量联合起来，在一天内铺设了电缆。

Clearwater和Lakeland成为了Peninsular的第三和第四个社区，达到了10,000站的记录。在一场棒球春季训练被忽略的比赛中，Clearwater击败了Lakeland，单日达到了目标。经理J. C. Edmunds和安装员R. A. Geiselman露出了胜利的笑容，而Mrs. C. R. Foster试用了第10,000个电话。

由于全国各地长途拨号的接近，公司重组了许多站点并完全消除了从坦帕拨号的前缀。一个统一的编号系统被取代。最后一次的切换在1950年完成，当在正常运行的航班中，员工们彻夜工作以完成项目。
The Pentel Club of St. Petersburg was organized in 1949 to promote better fellowship among company workers and to promote and finance sports teams and other recreational activities. Along with the Pioneer, Credit Union, and sports programs, employees are meeting more and more during off-duty hours.

R. L. Mehaffey, Plant City manager, received the company's first 45-year service pin from President Broein in 1949. At the pin presentation ceremony, now a semi-annual banquet, Mr. Broein stressed the security of individuals in their jobs and warned against false government "security."

Many of our World War II veterans continued their military training in the various reserve components. Here a group of Tampa national guardsmen pose before departing for their summer training at Ft. Jackson, S. C. Employees were released by the company in order to receive this valuable training.

Peninsular became one of the first telephone companies in the country to use a selected battery of tests as a yardstick for measuring potential operators. The girls who compile the highest scores in mechanical aptitude and emotional stability are now being chosen as "hello girls." This service has been made possible through the cooperation of the United States Employment Service.

President Broein and Taylor Scott, manager, look on as Rev. Garland C. Parsons calls a friend on the historic 150,000th phone for the company. The telephone's installers were M. R. Penney, a graduate of Peninsular's postwar apprenticeship program, and Glenn Sweeting, now an apprentice. The 150,000th telephone represented a 30-percent growth in only 42 months.

"Looks like the phone man was here while we were gone."

We all had problems. Peninsular applied for a rate increase at a time when over $5 million a year was paid in wages, when one-third of the company's gross receipts went to taxes, and when equipment and maintenance costs were soaring. Although the increase has not yet been granted, one bright spot was the company's more than 3,000 stockholders, who financed the $21 million postwar plant expansion program.
Major Bowes’ successor, Ted Mack, returned to our territory with his “Original Amateur Hour.” The company set up a battery of 20 telephones at the St. Petersburg Coliseum, site of the broadcast, to tabulate the phone-vote count. Compare this picture with the Major Bowes program photograph in the 1929-1938 section.

Mountains of paper are now required to print telephone directories for our more than 150,000 subscribers living in about 100 communities on the West Coast. A large trained staff is required to compile, correct, and distribute the semi-annual “best seller.” The famous yellow pages in the back of the directory are a standard shopping guide throughout our area.

1949-1951

In the Spring of 1949, three miles of 900-pair cable was planted in conduit stretching from Tampa’s Nebraska Ave. eastward to the overpass. Such new facilities helped the company to crowd one-third of its growth into a 42-month period. We installed as many phones during this time as in our first 40 years.

While rushing facilities for expanded service to completion, switchboards and other automatic equipment arrived by airplane, the first such air shipment of major telephone equipment in company history. The 2,544 pounds of equipment shipped by the manufacturer in New Jersey, was installed in the North Gulf Beach exchange.
Where do we go from here?

Confidence amid uncertainty exemplifies our movement into our second half-century. Cutbacks of metals important in the manufacture of telephone equipment — but vital in the production of defense goods — are forcing cutbacks in our planned expansion program.

To forecast our future should the Red fire engulf the civilized world would be risky indeed. We can only cite our past performance and recount our current assets:

Located in the country’s fastest growing state, we hope to progress along the pattern of the past 50 years. In these troubled times, we are once again reminded that the myriad of telephone equipment clicking robot-like 24-hours a day is not our most valuable asset.

The men and women of Peninsular, our employees, are our real dynamic force.

As always, where we go from here is in their hands.