

BUSINESS JOURNAL PHOTO/JEFF DYKEHOUSE

Dale Fox said CenturyTel has deliberately "niche'd" services for small communities.

Fox Notes New Services In Telecommunications

By Katy Rent

GRAND RAPIDS — Dale Fox is leading several changes for CenturyTel, and assuring that small communities have telecommunications services.

Fox, regional vice president of CenturyTel, a "phone guy" from the beginning, got his start with Ameritech, where he worked for many years.

"I graduated from the University of Michigan and was fortunate to get a chance to work for Ameritech in Chicago about 15 years ago.

"Then about 10 years ago I was transferred to Detroit, and it wasn't until our oldest daughter was of school age that we decided to move back to this part of the state," said Fox. Fox has held his current position at CenturyTel for four and a half years.

CenturyTel has been a telecommunications provider since 1946 and today is more than just a local telephone company for rural areas and smaller cities. In fact, the closest community where CenturyTel is a local phone company is Borculo.

Around here, CenturyTel is probably best known as a wireless communications provider and the first company to offer cellular telephone service in West Michigan.

BRIEFLY

Name: Dale Fox
Company: CenturyTel
Title: Region Vice President
Age: 41
Birthplace: Marshall, Mich.
Residence: Gaines Township
Personal: Wife, Maria, and two daughters, nine and six
Community Involvement: Habitat for Humanity, Mel Trotter Ministries, and on the board of the John Ball Zoological Society.
Biggest Career Break: Fox received his first major job by managing a wireless business and he worked with individuals who truly worked as a team. The concept of that type of work environment has stayed with him.

The company chooses to focus business in mostly non-metropolitan areas. Refusing to limit itself to one niche in the phone market, CenturyTel is also a national long-distance provider for both business and residential customers, as well as a long haul, high-speed transport system.

"Probably the most exciting news to develop lately is that we are licensed to provide competitive local exchange serv-

See Fox, page 6

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FOX

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ices in Michigan, meaning we can offer services to compete with the local telephone companies.

"And we will begin offering those services in Grand Rapids next month," said Fox.

An 800-mile fiber ring was just completed in Michigan for a route following I-94, U.S. 131, I-96 and I-75, and connects to Chicago from Kalamazoo. The company is mostly its own customer for the project but will also sell transport services to other companies that need fiber optic services between those markets.

The fiber optic ring will not increase

the calling area or the range of wireless phone service, but it will enhance the clarity of the call and the reliability of the service.

The enhanced clarity is due to the fiber optics, and as for reliability, Fox said, "the ring has a self-healing capability because if the ring is cut in one place, the traffic is automatically re-routed in the other direction.

"And if you only have a connection to one of your facilities, be it a cell site or be it a telephone switch of some type, if that one cable is cut, then everyone connected cannot make a call or cannot send their data. The self-healing ring is a big advantage when you are talking to

customers about reliability, especially in the summer when there is a lot of construction."

With Grand Rapids being the largest community the company serves, CenturyTel has found a service niche, which, as Fox said, continues to be a key to the company's success over the last 55 years.

"We believe that there is as much or more demand for telecommunications services in America's small cities and rural areas (2,000 to 10,000 population), and we face much less competition in those areas," explained Fox.

However, all of the small cities and rural communities do add up: CenturyTel

is now in 21 states and is the eighth largest telephone, wireless and cellular company in the country.

And so the quest continues to find the best way to serve the community members in those 21 states. Fox believes another upcoming piece of technology will do just that.

"It is a new radio spectrum that is called LMDS, local multi-point distribution system.

"In effect it is a radio spectrum that you can transmit voice or data over short distances, but you can transmit it at virtually the same speed as a fiber optic connection," said Fox.

"So you can connect buildings in a metropolitan area, or a building along our fiber ring could be connected back to our fiber ring without actually having to bury a cable or put a fiber optic connection in."

The system operates off of very small antennas at each site — about a cubic foot in size.

This is a cost saving measure, Fox insisted.

"It would be a less expensive way to connect to the outside world or to a current vendor that is providing that service today," added Fox.

As for Fox and CenturyTel, both look beyond business measures to help the communities they work in, assisting in various community programs. "We look at new opportunities every week," said Fox.

To date, the company has participated in Habitat for Humanity and a project with Mel Trotter Ministries. Fox said the company is always searching for ways to use its services to help in any way it can.

"We are a service provider and we do that everyday in business, but if we can get out there in a different form, we try to help out." **BJ**

Dedication to something larger than personal success."

Life Magazine,
"The Take-Over Generation"
September 14, 1962



AREND LUBBERS, 31
Lubbers became president of Central College, Pella, Iowa, at 29. Stressing the liberal arts, he is establishing a series of mind-stretching seminars by noted scholars such as historian Arnold Toynbee.

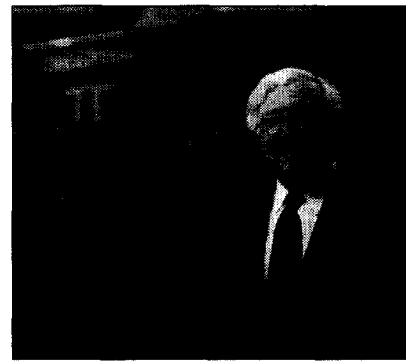
Life magazine 1962



President Lubbers 1969



Groundbreaking for Grand Rapids Campus 1986



President Lubbers today

In 1962, *Life* magazine selected the "Red-Hot 100" of America's promising young leaders. Among names like Andre Previn, Frank Church, Ted Sorenson and John Updike was Arend D. Lubbers, the young president of a small liberal arts school in Iowa.

Five years later, at the age of 36, Lubbers took on a challenge worthy of *Life's* description of these leaders with "the boldness to try out new ideas" and "a zest for hard work." Lubbers said 'Yes' in 1968 to an offer to lead a small state college of commuter students that had been established only a few years before in Allendale, Michigan.

To make a 30-year career very short, President Lubbers brought Grand Valley out on top. In fact, since 1985, Grand Valley has recorded the highest enrollment growth of any university in Michigan while increasing the quality of its entering students to rank among Michigan's top four universities for ACT scores. Today there are nearly 20,000 students on three campuses and more than 44,000 alumni.

While Grand Valley competes with other Michigan universities for students, faculty and funding, it is unique because it continues to be community-based. President Lubbers' leadership and vision kept the university solidly linked to the people it was originally created to serve.

Don Lubbers will be the first to tell you that he does not deserve the credit for the remarkable growth and success of Grand Valley. "The Board of Trustees, the community support, the faculty, the students," he will tell you, "... so many, many people contribute to the success." Yes. Exactly, because he had the vision, the charisma, and the sheer strength to bring people together, kept everyone moving in the same direction, and inspired us in good times and in bad. For all that and a lot more, we sincerely say, "Thank you, Don."



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Lake Protection Bill Goes To Governor

LANSING — Michigan Gov. John Engler is expected to sign a bill proposed by Senator Ken Sikkema (R-Grandville) to protect the Great Lakes from further incursions by foreign species.

The measure, which gives the Department of Environmental Quality jurisdiction over ocean-going ships' ballast water management and treatment, passed the Michigan House of Representatives last week after earlier cruising through the Senate.

For years cargo ships have discharged ballast water into the Great Lakes and that water, much of it from European ports, has carried with it creatures such as the zebra mussel and round goby which have become major problems for native lake species.

Sikkema, chairman of the Senate's Natural Resources and Environmental Committee, sponsored the measure because he believes the lakes' future depends upon stopping the introduction of additional exotic species. **BJ**

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