

Columbus Daily Advocate
July 29, 2008

Death claims former county resident, tech mogul

A former rural Columbus resident and technology innovator, died July 23 of cancer at Georgetown University Hospital near the nation's capitol.

Clay T. (Tom) Whitehead, 69, a telecommunications entrepreneur who played a major role in launching the commercial satellite industry in the U.S. and Europe and set the foundation for telecommunications policies that still guide the introduction of new technologies and the Internet.

Mr. Whitehead was a graduate of Cherokee County Community High School with the class of 1956.

An ardent believer in the marketplace of ideas, Mr. Whitehead dedicated his life to fostering technologies and policies that facilitated communication.

As the head of a White House, telecommunications policy office, Mr. Whitehead helped create a flexible, market-oriented policy for the newly developed communications satellite technology. The "Open Skies" satellite policy led not only a flourishing satellite industry, it permitted new cable TV networks, like C-SPAN, CNN and HBO to flourish.

After leaving government, Mr. Whitehead went on to found Hughes Communications, Inc. in 1978, which proved to be the Hughes Aircrafts Company's most successful enterprise. His idea to create Galaxy, a satellite system to carry television programming to cable operators across the U.S. became the model for satellite television distribution and broadcasting around the world.

In a similar vein, when he left Hughes in 1983, he created the first private satellite television business in Europe, now known as SES Astra, which brought satellite television broadcasting to Europe for the first time and now is one of the largest satellite companies in the world.

As the first Director of the White House Office of Telecommunication Policy, he set policy ground rules for the introduction of new technologies, such as cable, that revolutionized the existing broadcasting and telephone industries. Mr. Whitehead's goal was to introduce competition and deregulation into industries that had been characterized by intrusive government regulation and lackluster monopoly structures.

Specifically, his policy led to the Justice Department lawsuit that ended AT&T's monopoly on local telephone service. He also was responsible for a cable TV-broadcast TV compromise that led the FCC to loosen restrictions on cable television, enabling it to compete on a national level.

Immediately before leaving government service in 1974, he was one of four men that secretly planned Vice President Ford's transition to the Presidency in the month's before President Nixon's resignation.

Most recently, he was Distinguished Visiting Professor of Communications Policy at George Mason University.

Clay Thomas Whitehead was born November 13, 1938 in Neodesha, and grew up in Columbus.

As an ardent radio fan in his youth, he became particularly interested in long distance communication. He spent hours on his Heathkit ham radio talking to other amateur operators throughout the world.

Mr. Whitehead received an M.S. in electrical engineering from M.I.T. and Ph.D in management and economics from the Sloan School there. He was a member of the Pershing Rifles there and later served two years in the United States Army achieving the rank of First Lieutenant. He volunteered to go to Vietnam, but because of his expertise, was instead assigned to Edgewood Arsenal.

Mr. Whitehead was significant supporter of several free speech organizations, including the Freedom Forum and the Global Internet Freedom Consortium, a group dedicated to countering internet censorship in China. He also served on numerous business, policy and nonprofit boards, including the Yosemite National Institutes, an environmental organization that he chaired during its period of most dramatic growth.

He held the patent for a spot beam satellite whose signals could be detected by small antennae, making them more affordable for individuals and small business.

Mr. Whitehead took particular pleasure in eliminating an archaic ban on kite flying on the Mall in Washington D.C. Afterward, in celebration, he flew his kite as high as he could, so high that it landed high in the east window of the Monument causing a traffic jam on Fifteenth Street.

He loved to listen to live bluegrass and Cajun music and to fly. He maintained a pilot's license for most of the last three decades.

He was a member of St. John's Episcopal Church and the Metropolitan and Cosmos Clubs.

While a student at CCCHS Mr. Whitehead was a member of the band, science club, student council, math club and was selected to boy's state. He also served as president of his class during their freshman year.

Survivors include his wife of 35 years, Margaret, his two children, Dr. Abigail Craine of Lemoore, California and Clay C. Whitehead of San Francisco, and three sisters, Susan and Nancy Whitehead and Helen Conerly.



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[Clay Whitehead dies](#)

Clay Whitehead dies

Chris Forrester,

Clay 'Tom' Whitehead, a true pioneer of [satellite](#) and pay-TV broadcasting died a few days ago (July 23) [in Washington](#) DC aged 69. He had been suffering from [prostate](#) cancer. Dr Whitehead was one of the founders of Luxembourg satellite operator Astra.

Dr Whitehead had an illustrious [engineering](#) career and for four years from 1970 was the White House's director of Telecommunications Policy. He was a far-thinking pioneer, and said his chief concern was to try and get the (then) Nixon administration to become "more anticipatory" in addressing rapid technological change.

His far-thinking very much extended to the role satellites could, and would, play in the future. Dr Whitehead is [credited](#) with demolishing the Comsat and Intelsat monopoly over transmission, and his encouragement allowed rival systems to come to the fore and thus help the emerging cable industry bypass AT&T's costly leased lines.

Q In 1979 he joined Hughes Communications as president, and was instrumental in backing the launch of the Galaxy program of [commercial](#) satellites. He left Hughes in 1983 in order to put together a \$180m consortium that evolved into Astra.

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C Unfortunately he spent some 10 years of his life in a legal squabble with SES Astra (and the Luxembourg [government](#)) claiming a [total](#) of \$1.8bn and receiving some €30m as [dividend](#) payments in a Court-ordered settlement in June 2002.

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Clay T. Whitehead, RIP



Judging a life from the headlines attached to it can be a grave mistake. That's certainly the case with Clay T. Whitehead, the former Nixon White House aide who died last month at the age of 69. He spent virtually his whole life working to expand the television universe and break viewers out of the three-channel monopoly that dominated the industry for its first 40 years. But that struggle was conducted completely outside public view. Whitehead's single brush with fame ran in quite the opposite direction.

In 1973, while heading Nixon's Office of Telecommunications Policy, Whitehead gave a widely reported speech lashing out against liberal bias in TV network news -- what he called "ideological plugola" of "so-called professionals who confuse sensation with sense and who dispense elitist gossip in the guise of news analysis." Whitehead said the White House

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would introduce legislation that would revoke the licenses of local stations that "fail to act to correct imbalance or consistent bias from the networks."

The speech, coming on the heels of Vice President Spiro Agnew's repeated tirades against the media, won him a reputation as a Nixonian hatchetman. Unlike Agnew's rhetoric, Whitehead's threat had real teeth. Revoking stations' licenses for bias in a network newscast -- whether real or imagined -- would have quickly led to the end of network news. How could a station manager in Hutchinson, Kansas, or Roswell, New Mexico, possibly be expected to fact-check a Walter Cronkite newscast in advance? Time magazine, in a fairly typical (and reasonably accurate) attack, called Whitehead's speech "a blatant attempt to use the government's licensing power to enforce certain political views or standards."

There was less publicity when Whitehead, soon after, apologized to broadcasters for the speech -- and less still for the fact that the legislation he mentioned was never introduced. For the rest of the Nixon administration, Whitehead's name was pretty much synonymous with Agnew's, at least among the general public. Only a few industry insiders understood that in the White House, Whitehead was actually working for policies that would eventually lead to the creation of cable television as we know it today, offering Americans a broad spectrum of voices not only in entertainment programming but in news and public affairs as well. You can [read my full account of his pioneering work in Sunday's Miami Herald](#).


I've always assumed that Whitehead was a dedicated culture warrior who simply changed tactics, deciding that diluting the power of the networks through deregulation would be easier than beating them over the head with license revocations. But Brian Lamb, who worked for Whitehead in the Office of Telecommunications Policy and later went on to found CSPAN, told me last week that he never believed Whitehead was much concerned about liberal bias at the networks at all. Whitehead, Lamb says, was simply trying to placate the real White House hatchetman, Nixon adviser Charles Colson, who subsequently went to jail for his role in the Watergate scandal.

"You've got to remember that we were always looking over our shoulders in that White House," Lamb said. "They were a lot more interested in fighting with the Democrats over Vietnam and Watergate than in telecommunications policy. They wanted everything we did to be a part of that fight. And Colson was the big gun. He could have shut us down at any time. In fact, he almost did when [Whitehead] called for the abolition of the Fairness Doctrine."

What Whitehead was really interested in, Lamb says, was diversity in broadcasting. "He wanted more voices, more voices, always more voices," Lamb declares. He certainly got them. Take a look at this week's TV schedule: Bill Maher, Jon Stewart, Bill O'Reilly, Keith Olbermann, Nancy Grace, Glenn Beck, Stephen Colbert. Without cable television, we wouldn't have any of them, and without Clay T. Whitehead, we wouldn't have cable.

Posted by Glenn Garvin at 10:20 AM in [Cable series](#), [Cable service](#), [FCC and regulation](#), [Newscasts & journalists](#) | [Permalink](#)

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Current News

Miami Herald: Tom Whitehead's Vision

The late Clay T. ("Tom") Whitehead, former Distinguished Professor of Communications Policy at Mason, possessed a vision of the future in telecommunications that helped shape the communications world as we know it today, according to **Professor Thomas Hazlett**, whose comments on Whitehead's importance to that industry were carried in an August 3 *Miami Herald* article.

"Before Whitehead, the idea that any part of the telecommunications market could be open to competition was radical," Hazlett told the newspaper. "In television you had three networks; in telephone you had Ma Bell and nobody else."

"All the stuff that has come since -- cable television and cellphones and broadband -- springs from the idea that Tom Whitehead introduced, that a competitive market would bring innovation and diversity," said Hazlett. "You can't say that everything that's happened since 1974 is attributable to one guy, I guess, but if you could, it would be Tom. He was very, very important."

When Whitehead arrived at the White House in 1970 as a 31-year-old junior economist, he suggested unifying telecommunications policy under a single White House office. As the head of this new office, Whitehead assembled a small team that included CSPAN founder Brian Lamb and a youthful Antonin Scalia, now a U.S. Supreme Court justice. Together, the members of that team fought for an "open skies" policy that would allow private companies to launch communications satellites, with that policy becoming law in 1974. The resultant swift launch of private communications satellites served to spawn the cable television industry that we know today and to chart a course away from the monopolistic telecommunication policies of the past.

His ideas launched the future, *Miami Herald*, August 3, 2008. By Glenn Garvin.

Excerpt:

"Extending a TV signal beyond its ordinary broadcast range in those days required using long chains of microwave repeaters, one every 30 miles or so. But if the cable companies could get access to reasonably priced satellites, Whitehead knew, the sky would literally be the limit. They could start producing original content and competing

with the broadcast networks.

"For the next three and a half years, Whitehead fought ceaselessly for open skies. Along the way, he took up some other battles on behalf of cable. Broadcasters, who also sensed the potential threat from cable companies, were trying to strangle them by charging exorbitant copyright fees to carry signals from local stations. The Supreme Court had already ruled against them once, but the broadcasters, experts in bureaucratic guerrilla warfare, were using the FCC to fight back.

"Tom just announced one day that he was going to conduct negotiations on this,' Lamb recalls. 'He used the power of the White House to call everybody in, and Scalia sat there and knocked heads, and he got them to agree to rates. And then the FCC had to back off.'

"The open-skies policy Whitehead wanted finally became law in 1974. Western Union launched Westar 1, the first private communications satellite, that April. The next year, RCA followed suit; the principal customer for its Satcom 1 satellite was an obscure New York cable company called HBO. Showtime, TBS, CSPAN and the channels that would eventually become the USA and Christian Broadcasting networks followed soon after. The lively, burgeoning cable industry that Whitehead envisioned was well on its way to reality. He would live to see the day when, at any given moment, more than half the television viewers in America were watching the cable channels he midwived.

"It's not exactly correct to say that Whitehead's struggle against the telecommunications monopolies has been largely forgotten. Mostly it was never known in the first place. The arguments, though fierce, were also dry and technical, and Whitehead's vision was so far beyond the horizons of imagination that most people never even faintly understood the implications.

"That remained true even after he left the government and made millions of dollars in the satellite industry. Lamb remembers a conversation 20 years ago in which Whitehead was predicting that television's giant satellite dishes could be shrunken to a couple of feet in diameter and placed in every home in America. 'Everybody thought he was completely nuts,' Lamb says. 'And I think about it every time I drive down my street and look at all those DirecTV dishes.'"

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Posted on Mon, Aug. 04, 2008

Remembering the Nixon official who gave us cable television

Glenn Garvin | Miami Herald

last updated: August 04, 2008 07:37:29 AM

You've probably never heard of Clay T. Whitehead. But without him, you'd never have seen Tony Soprano carry out a hit, or shed a tear when Big dumped Carrie Bradshaw. You'd never have cheered or booed Bill O'Reilly or Keith Olbermann. You quite possibly never would have dialed a number on a cellphone or logged onto the Internet.

One man couldn't have invented all those characters or things, of course. (In the case of O'Reilly and Olbermann, you've got to suspect the work of space aliens.) But Whitehead, who died last month at 69, made them all possible.

From 1970 to 1974, working as the youthful head of an obscure White House department armed with little more than his gumption, Tom Whitehead (as he was known to his friends) rammed through a series of policy decisions that not only created cable television as we know it today but also broke the entire telecommunications industry loose from monopoly control.

"Before Whitehead, the idea that any part of the telecommunications market could be open to competition was radical," says Tom Hazlett, a former FCC economist who teaches communications law at George Mason University. "In television you had the three networks; in telephone you had Ma Bell and nobody else.

"All the stuff that has come since — cable television and cellphones and broadband — springs from the idea that Tom Whitehead introduced, that a competitive market would bring innovation and diversity. You can't say that everything that's happened since 1974 is attributable to one guy, I guess, but if you could, it would be Tom. He was very, very important."

When Whitehead arrived at the White House in 1970, nobody — not him, and certainly not the Nixon administration he was joining — could have foreseen the giant deregulatory snowball he was about to set rolling downhill. He was just a junior economist (only 31 years old, a very junior economist) with a largely undefined job.

Almost casually, he suggested that telecommunications policy — which was managed piecemeal by the FCC and several congressional committees, all of them heavily under the sway of the industry's free-spending lobbyists — should be unified in a single White House office. His bosses, preoccupied with the Vietnam War — and soon the Watergate scandal — agreed. And when they couldn't come up with an obvious candidate for the job, they gave it to Whitehead himself.

Whitehead promptly assembled a small but talented team that included Brian Lamb, who would go on to found the cable public-affairs network CSPAN, and a hard-nosed young lawyer named Antonin Scalia. And they launched what certainly looked like a kamikaze mission: fighting for an "open skies" policy that would permit private companies to launch communications satellites. Practically everybody — the FCC, the congressional committees, and especially the behemoth phone monopoly AT&T — favored granting just one company (guess which one) control over all satellites.

"Everybody figured back then that if there was ever a natural monopoly, it was satellites," says Hazlett. That was especially so within the Nixon administration, which was wary of free-market economics (Nixon remains the only American president to have imposed widespread peacetime wage and price controls) and saw satellites as a national-security issue.

But Whitehead had a different agenda. He wanted to break up the cozy three-network monopoly that had controlled American television since its birth in the 1930s. His unlikely candidate for the task: cable TV, in those days a scrawny industry that existed mostly to bring the signals of big-city channels to remote little towns that didn't have their own stations.

Extending a TV signal beyond its ordinary broadcast range in those days required using long chains of microwave repeaters, one every 30 miles or so. But if the cable companies could get access to reasonably priced satellites, Whitehead knew, the sky would literally be the limit. They could start producing original content and competing with the broadcast networks.

For the next three and a half years, Whitehead fought ceaselessly for open skies. Along the way, he took up some other battles on behalf of cable. Broadcasters, who also sensed the potential threat from cable companies, were trying to strangle them by charging exorbitant "copyright fees" to carry signals from local stations. The Supreme Court had already ruled against them once, but the broadcasters, experts in bureaucratic guerrilla warfare, were using the FCC to fight back.

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[Read Miami Herald TV critic Glenn Garvin on the Whitehead speech that worried broadcasters.](#)

July 31, 2008

Clay T. Whitehead, Guide of Policy That Helped Cable TV, Is Dead at 69

By [DENNIS HEVESI](#)

Clay T. Whitehead, the official in the Nixon administration who laid the groundwork for Open Skies, the policy that led to the creation of the domestic satellite system that brought cable television and lower-cost long-distance telephone service into millions of American homes, died in Washington on July 23. He was 69 and lived in McLean, Va.

The cause was prostate cancer, his wife, Margaret, said.

As director of the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy from 1970 to 1974, Mr. Whitehead (who preferred to be called by the diminutive of his middle name, Tom) was a technological innovator with a free-market approach to the newborn information revolution and a controversial voice in President [Richard M. Nixon](#)'s battles with journalists.

In the throes of the Vietnam War and Watergate, Brian Lamb, chief executive of C-Span, the public affairs cable network, said in a telephone interview this week, "Tom walked a fine line when they wanted in many cases to use the power levers of the White House to manipulate or control the output of the media." At the time, Mr. Lamb was Mr. Whitehead's assistant.

Two phrases from a speech Mr. Whitehead gave in 1972 came to epitomize his and the administration's contention of a liberal bias in network news: "elitist gossip" and "ideological plugola."

Still, Mr. Lamb said: "The most important thing Tom did was to direct the president's policy on domestic satellite communications. That was the trigger that led to the diminution of power of the three networks and [AT&T](#), allowing for the creation of new cable television channels and low-cost long-distance telephone systems."

Under Open Skies, which became [Federal Communications Commission](#) policy, any qualified company could launch a domestic communications satellite, meaning potential users did not have to subscribe to one major provider. There are now several dozen satellites in the system.

Mr. Whitehead was chairman of a cabinet committee that issued a report in 1974, setting the tone for the future of cable television. It called for the virtual removal of government regulation over the new medium. Until then, cable had been seen as an extension of broadcast television, subject to regulation under the Communications Act of 1934.

“The committee has concluded,” the report said, “that programming, advertising and other information and services on cable channels can be allowed to develop on a free and competitive basis, with no more regulatory power exercised over the content of this communications medium than is exercised over the print or film media.”

Thomas Hazlett, a professor of economics and law at George Mason University, said that Mr. Whitehead “spearheaded a deregulatory movement that brought much more liberal rules and far stronger First Amendment protection to the emerging media.”

“Cable television was first,” he continued, “but the effect of allowing the new information services to compete in a more open environment set the stage for progress in the technologies to come, including the Internet and cellular.”

But Mr. Whitehead had to perform a balancing act. In 1972, he rattled the nation’s public broadcasting system when he recommended that it end national news and public affairs programming and stress local programming, or possibly lose government funds.

A memorandum he wrote to Mr. Nixon said: “We stand to gain substantially from an increase in the relative power of the local stations. They are generally less liberal and more concerned with education than with controversial national affairs. Further, a decentralized system would have far less influence and be far less attractive to social activists.”

Yet, in 1974, Mr. Whitehead persuaded the president to sign a bill prepared by his office that extended federal funds for public television for five years.

One evening in April 1974, as the Watergate crisis moved toward its climax, Philip W. Buchen, a member of Vice President [Gerald R. Ford](#)’s staff, went to dinner at Mr. Whitehead’s home and said: “We have to do some planning for Jerry. We have to face the fact the president may resign.” For the next three months, Mr. Whitehead, Mr. Buchen and three other federal aides laid out plans for Mr. Ford’s first days in office.

Clay Thomas Whitehead was born in Neodesha, Kan., on Nov. 13, 1938, the eldest of four children of Clay and Helen Hinton Whitehead. He graduated from the [Massachusetts Institute of Technology](#) with a degree in electrical engineering in 1960; earned a master’s degree there in the same field a year later; and in 1967 received a doctorate in management from M.I.T.

In 1973, he married Margaret Mahon. Besides his wife, he is survived by a son, Clay; a daughter, Abigail Craine; and three sisters, Susan and Nancy Whitehead and Helen Conerly.

Mr. Whitehead came early to telecommunications. As a boy, he spent hours on his Heathkit ham radio talking to amateur operators around the world. With his M.I.T. degrees, he took that interest to defense studies at the RAND Corporation.

After his White House service, Mr. Whitehead joined Hughes Aircraft, starting the [Hughes Communications](#) subsidiary and forming Galaxy, a satellite system that carried television programming to

cable operators around the country. Mr. Whitehead left Hughes in 1983 and started SES-ASTRA, the first private satellite business in Europe.

Not all of his flying interests were extraterrestrial. On April 7, 1970, while at the White House, Mr. Whitehead wrote a memorandum to a colleague, Jeb Magruder, protesting a 1892 law that banned kite-flying in Washington.

“I reiterate my suggestion that we consider a presidential message asking for repeal,” he wrote.

The law was repealed. Soon after, Mr. Whitehead flew a kite on the National Mall; it struck the Washington Monument.

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Class Notes

January-February 2009

I am writing these notes on September 14 as Marie and I prepare to depart for our annual autumn stay in Italy. While there I will also make a trip to Cambodia, the fifth of six trips to Southeast Asia I have planned for 2008.

Let me begin these notes with some especially good news, the state of our class's Endowment for Innovation in Education (EFIE). Our class treasurer (and webmaster), **Jorge Rodriguez**, has recently posted the EFIE numbers for June 30, 2008, to our class website. They show that since our 25th Reunion you have contributed over \$1.5 million to EFIE, which now has a market value of about \$6.2 million, and with almost \$1.7 million being awarded to our Faculty Fellows. Congratulations to you all! Visit our class website, <http://alumweb.mit.edu/classes/1960/efie-fund.html> to see the total picture of EFIE, as well as other up-to-date information on class activities. Also, if you still have your copy of the September/October 2008 Technology Review, take a look at page M26 with the class news for 1943 and 1944. There you find a great photo showing Jorge, **Linda Sprague**, and **Barry Bronfin** signing the Treasurer's Memo that reestablishes (but did not launch, as stated in the caption) the relationship between EFIE and the Institute.

One of my regular contributors and a 50th Reunion committee stalwart, **Sue Schur**, is having another exhibition of her paintings in May 2009 at the Somerville, MA, Library's Auditorium Gallery, with an opening reception on May 4, from 5:30 to 8:30 PM. You are all invited. Looking farther ahead, in March 2010, Sue's magazine, Technology & Conservation will be sponsoring an international conference on Glass and Glazing in the 21st Century. This conference is co-sponsored by MIT's Department of Architecture and Boston's Society of Architects.

I received some newsy correspondence from **Sheldon Epstein**, who is still hard at work in Wilmette, IL, running his own engineering firm. Shel reported that he continues to enjoy learning to use new technologies and that the computers he recently purchased have allowed him to take advantage of many new approaches to his business. On a less pleasant note, Shel reports that the worst storm he had ever seen on Chicago's North Shore flooded his and Suzanne's home. Shel wrote that our neighborhood looked like it had been bombed, with many downed trees and ripped-off roofs. Shel decided to be his own general contractor for the rebuilding, a strenuous experience, but one that taught him a lot about materials, tools, and technologies used in homebuilding. Shel is pleased with his finished product. Shel reports that he and Suzie have been married 47-plus years and are particularly enjoying their four grandchildren, all of whom live nearby. Like many of us, Shel and Suzanne are looking forward to June 2010 and our 50th Reunion. Shel, noting the number of obituaries appearing in this column, suggested that we start a tontine. I know Shel is a lawyer, but I also believe that tontines are illegal, so I am going to stay away from that one!

I now turn to reporting the death of three classmates.

Gordon S. Mutchler died on August 15, 2008, in Houston, TX. Gordon was a professor of physics at Rice University. Gordon's warmth and sense of humor will be missed by his colleagues at Rice. The class extends its sincere sympathies to Gordon's wife, Lynne, and his family and friends.

I also sadly report the death of **Clay T. (Tom) Whitehead** who died of prostate cancer on July 23,

2008, at Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, DC. After obtaining his doctorate in management from MIT in 1967, Tom was an economist for the Rand Corporation. Soon thereafter, he joined the Nixon Administration as an expert on budget policy. As a member of that Administration, Tom helped cable TV flourish by bringing competition to the satellite market in the early 1970s. President Nixon appointed Tom as the country's first telecommunications policy adviser where he championed free markets in the satellite business. In the mid-1980s, Tom also challenged Europe's state-owned television systems by helping organize the first private European satellite system, SES Astra in Luxembourg. He was also the founding president of Hughes Communications where he developed the Galaxy program of commercial satellites. Tom is survived by his wife Margaret, and two children, as well as three sisters, to all of whom we extend our sympathy.

In our November/December 2008 column, I briefly reported that death of **Robert J. Keeney**. Bob's longtime friend and classmate **Ralph Cuomo** passed along additional details about Bob, which I am including here. Ralph, as well as other friends, received personal notes and copies of Bob's obituary that Bob had asked his wife, Marge, to send to them after his death. Bob died at his home in Milford, MI, of choroidal melanoma. Bob had a forty year career with GE in their electrical power distribution business, much of the time as a technical sales representative and manager, with his final position being GE's manager for industrial sales to GM. After his retirement in 2000, Bob and Marge wintered in Hilton Head and spent extensive time traveling, visiting nearly 100 countries on 6 continents. While Bob was also a single digit handicap golfer, his interests included all sports and harvesting wild mushrooms. Bob is survived by Marge, his wife of 50-plus years, two children, and three grandchildren. The class sends its sympathy to his family and many friends.

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[RIP Anne L. Armstrong And Clay T. Whitehead](#)

July 31, 2008 by [Robert Nedelkoff](#) | Filed Under [American Politics](#), [Entertainment](#), [In Memoriam](#), [Internet](#), [News media](#), [Nixon Administration figures](#), [Republican Party](#), [Richard Nixon](#), [Technology](#), [U.S. History](#)

The last week saw the passing of a man and a woman who were both not only important figures at the Nixon White House, but by any measure significant in twentieth-century American history. On July 23, Clay T. Whitehead, director of the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy between 1970 and 1974, [died](#) in Washington at age 69. During his time in that office, he gained fame among journalists for his vigorous defenses of Nixon Administration policy in his press briefings. But it was what he did (with the help of his assistant Brian Lamb, later to found C-SPAN) to create and further the Open Skies policy that made history. This policy permitted telecommunications companies to send up their own satellites and establish the networks that made both nationwide cable TV and competing, low-price long-distance phone services possible. This in turn opened the way for the Internet and cellular technology as we know it. (Indeed, had President Nixon been able to serve out his second term, Whitehead's vision of a wired America could have brought [something akin](#) to the World Wide Web into being a decade before it happened.) In the 1980s, Whitehead played a central role in bringing cable TV and cellular communications to Europe. Ironically, he does not have his own Wikipedia entry and is barely mentioned elsewhere at the site.

And yesterday Anne Legendre Armstrong [died](#) in Houston at age 80. She was raised in an old Creole family in New Orleans and, after graduating from Vassar and briefly working in the New York magazine world, married a rancher and moved to Texas, where she switched from the Democratic to the Republican party and became active in GOP politics. From 1970 until 1973, she was co-chair of the Republican National Committee and played an important role in generating support for Nixon's re-election among women and Democrats. In 1973 she became the first woman to serve as counselor to the President, and was one of the White House's strongest defenders during the Watergate era. During the Ford Administration she became the first female Ambassador to Great Britain, and in the Reagan era she headed the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1987. Both of these far-sighted Americans of high achievement will be much missed.

Comments

2 Responses to "RIP Anne L. Armstrong And Clay T. Whitehead"

1. Maarja Krusten on July 31st, 2008 4:40 pm

Many thanks for posting this. Of course, I had seen the news obituaries for Clay Whitehead and Anne Armstrong in the Washington Post. I thought, "surely, someone at the New Nixon site will post a thoughtful entry about both of them."

You did a nice job with your write-up!

1. [Not Forgotten : The New Nixon: News and Commentary about the President, his Times, and his Legacy](#)

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July 29, 2008

Paid Notice: Deaths WHITEHEAD, CLAY T

WHITEHEAD--Clay T. The Trustees and staff of Hudson Institute mourn the passing of Trustee Clay T. "Tom" Whitehead. We pay tribute to his legacy of entrepreneurship as a seminal figure in the satellite television broadcast industry and in public service as Special Assistant to President Nixon and as the first Director of the Office of Telecommunications Policy at the White House. Allan R. Tessler, Chairman, Hudson Institute

The Information Economy Project Remembers Clay T. Whitehead

Posted on [July 29, 2008](#)



A great American, and valued friend of the IEP, has been lost. Clay “Tom” Whitehead was a key historical figure, driving radical notions about competition in telecommunications before those ideas were in vogue. Indeed, when Dr. Whitehead organized the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy in 1971, most countries considered the U.S. a bit odd for having a private monopoly, AT&T, rather than a state PTT. Tom saw what others missed, however, envisioning a world in which private rivals offered businesses and individuals competitive voice, video, or data services, tapping into innovative technologies and delivering the efficiencies of the market.



Clay T. Whitehead listens as Supreme Court Justice Scalia speaks to George Mason law students.

After an illustrious government career, Tom achieved great success as an entrepreneur, and in recent years settled back into academia as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at GMU Law School. We were privileged to have Tom Whitehead as a colleague, and deeply saddened by his passing. Our sympathy extends to his family and friends, of which there were very many. We are honored to have been included in that fine circle. The quality of that vision is reflected in the fact that today — not four decades later — it seems utterly obvious. Not nearly so when Tom launched his regulatory initiative, achieving one fundamental redefinition of U.S. policy — the “open skies” policy in satellites — and laying the predicate for myriad reforms to come.

Tribute to Clay T. Whitehead (presented at the 37th Telecommunications Policy Research Conference (TPRC), Arlington, Virginia, September 25, 2009)

[Lisa Sockett: Tribute to Tom Whitehead \(13.56Kb\)](#)

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[Clay T. Whitehead Tribute by Thomas W. Hazlett \(39.43Kb\)](#)

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- Clay T. Whitehead, Guide of Policy That Helped Cable TV, Is Dead at 69, *New York Times* (July 31, 2008)
- Clay Whitehead, 69; Changed TV Landscape, *Washington Post* (July 29, 2008)
- Appreciation: His ideas launched the future, *Miami Herald* (Aug. 3, 2008)
- Mason Gazette: Former Distinguished Visiting Professor Whitehead Dies (Aug. 1, 2008)

Things Worth Remembering From Telecommunications Policy Review, Vol. 24, No. 30 (July 27, 2008).

When a serious history of U.S. telecommunications policy in the last quarter of the 20th century is written, Clay T. (“Tom”) Whitehead will probably get creditable mention. He died this past week following a recurrence of cancer. And, we thought that needed to be noted.

Tom Whitehead was raised in Cherokee County, Kansas — he once said his home town was “like that town in Last Picture Show.” He got a bachelor’s and Master’s degree in electrical engineering from MIT — no mean accomplishment in the 1960s — and then a PhD. in systems analysis (for a time, his dissertation adviser was MIT Professor, later Council of Economic Advisers Member and Yale Dean, Paul W. MacAvoy). Your Review’s Editorial Committee, incidentally, actually owns a copy of Dr. Whitehead’s bound MIT dissertation (albeit gnawed — though only a little — by a young Golden retriever, possible eager for some learning). All about Festinger’s theory of post-cognitive dissonance. Arcane things like that.

Whitehead ended up at the Nixon White House, working with Peter Flanigan and Jonathan C. Rose. Whitehead once half-jokingly said his greatest accomplishment there was getting the District of Columbia’s law banning the flying of kites repealed (it had been passed in the 1900s because of the risk of frightening horses, and like all good regulatory schemes, persisted well after the initial justification ended). But he also “inherited” the recommendations of the Rostow Task Force on Telecommunications Policy (this was an effort chaired by Under Secretary of State Eugene Rostow — now U.S. appeals court Judge Richard Posner was the deputy director).

Completed in the waning days of the Johnson Administration, the Rostow Task Force recommended a series of pro-competitive changes in U.S. communications policies, perhaps most notably the competitive development of U.S. domestic satellite services. That recommendation was a challenge to Comsat Corporation — created by the Kennedy Administration — as well as AT&T (which, at the time, owned half the stock in Comsat).

Tom Whitehead pushed to have an Office of Telecommunications Policy (OTP) created within the Executive Office of the President (at the time, there was an Office of Telecommunications Management which was part of the Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP) —

predecessor of today's FEMA, and one of the most powerful agencies in Government because the OEP Director administered America's oil import quotas). OTP, Whitehead, and the Antitrust Division of the U.S. Department of Justice then encouraged FCC Chairman Dean Burch to adopt the domestic satellite recommendations, which the agency commendably did.

As OTP Director, Whitehead battled Congress over public broadcast authorization legislation (President Nixon vetoed one such bill). Whitehead and his senior staff — including now-Justice Nino Scalia (and, C-SPAN inventor Brian Lamb) — developed a “cable compromise” to allow for speedier development of cable television. Whitehead overlooked the personnel recommendations of former Senator Montoya — later ousted for corruption — and, as a result, lost his Chrysler New York sedan, and had to be driven in a GSA Motor Pool Plymouth instead. Mr. Coyt Belo, Whitehead's driver, incidentally, was to be OMB Director David Stockman's driver for years.

Tom Whitehead had tense relations with Senator John Pastore, long-time Chairman of the Senate Communications Subcommittee, and Massachusetts Congressman Torbert MacDonald (whose initial claim-to-fame was playing football at Harvard and rooming for a while with John F. Kennedy). But Whitehead and OTP were new kids on the U.S. telecommunications policymaking block at the time, and that was to be expected.

Tom Whitehead left Government service soon after President Nixon departed for “Casa Pacifica” in San Clemente. He went on to success in a variety of satellite and financial ventures (Google can provide a good deal in that regard). But getting competitive domestic satellite service was probably his singular accomplishment. Remember, but for that service we wouldn't have the cable television system we do now — nor the competitive business communications that made growth on the part of a lot of other industries possible.

Now, one aspect of Dr. Whitehead's career involved facilitating the Nixon-Ford transition — something which was detailed in “Woodstein's” sequel to *All the President's Men*. Like many books of this era, *The Final Days* is hard to find — it's been “de-accessioned” by too many libraries. But it's a book worth scouting out and acquiring. Here's a brief excerpt:

Phil Buchen of Grand Rapids... dined that evening [April 1974] at the Georgetown home of Clay T. Whitehead, director of the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy. Buchen spent tree days a week in Washington as executive director of the Federal Privacy Commission headed by his former law partner, the Vice President of the United States [and billeted in the OTP offices]. ... Whitehead... agreed to help prepare for a transfer of power. ... In Washington that evening [June 1974], Whitehead and Buchen met with the new members of the transition team for the first time: Brian Lamb, Whitehead's assistant... ; Larry Lynn, a former aide to Kissinger at the NSC; Jonathan Moore, formerly an assistant to

Rockefeller and then to Elliot Richardson. The five men sat around Whitehead's dining-room table, drinking Cokes. (Bob Woodward & Carl Bernstein, *The Final Days* (1976) at pp. 158, 214 (excerpted)).

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- [Miami Herald \(http://www.law.gmu.edu/news/2008/hazlett_whitehead\)](http://www.law.gmu.edu/news/2008/hazlett_whitehead)
- [Mason Gazette \(http://www.law.gmu.edu/news/2008/whitehead\)](http://www.law.gmu.edu/news/2008/whitehead)

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(Bob Woodward & Carl Bernstein, The Final Days (1976) at pp. 158, 214 (excerpted)).

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Former Distinguished Visiting Professor Whitehead Dies

August 1, 2008

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Clay T. “Tom” Whitehead, 69, former Distinguished Visiting Professor of Communications Policy at Mason and the nation’s first telecommunications policy advisor, died on July 23 from prostate cancer.

Whitehead taught a Communications and the Law seminar at Mason’s law school in 2005. For the seminar, he arranged an outstanding cadre of guest speakers that included Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia; Richard Wiley, former FCC chairman; Donald Baker, former assistant attorney general for antitrust at the Department of Justice; and Brian Lamb, founder and president of C-SPAN.

As special assistant to President Richard Nixon, Whitehead oversaw policy development for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Atomic Energy Commission, the National Science Foundation and the Federal Communications Commission.



Clay T. Whitehead listens as Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia speaks to students in the Communications and Law Seminar during a 2005 visit.

Photo by Steven Tuttle

In 1970, Whitehead was confirmed by the U.S. Senate as the first director of the U.S. Office of Telecommunications Policy at the White House. In this position, he championed competition and deregulation in telecommunications, cable, broadcasting and satellite at a time when the monopoly model was preeminent.

Whitehead is credited with encouraging the FCC to adopt an “open skies” policy, which allowed multiple nongovernmental entities to construct and operate communications satellite facilities. This policy revolutionized the television industry by enabling cable operators to provide nationwide programming on a competitive basis.

Whitehead, a veteran and father of two, received BS, MS and PhD degrees from M.I.T. He is survived by his wife and children.

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The Washington Post

Clay Whitehead, 69; Changed TV Landscape

By Adam Bernstein
Washington Post Staff Writer
Tuesday, July 29, 2008

Clay T. "Tom" Whitehead, 69, who helped the cable industry flourish by bringing competition to the domestic satellite market in the early 1970s, died July 23 at Georgetown University Hospital. He had prostate cancer.

During the Nixon administration, Mr. Whitehead became the country's first telecommunications policy adviser and championed free markets in the satellite business. He later revolutionized the way communications satellites were sold -- outright to cable providers instead of leasing them to those companies.

Starting in the mid-1980s, he challenged Europe's state-owned television systems by spearheading the first private Pan-European television satellite system, Luxembourg-based SES Astra. It became one of the continent's most popular and profitable private satellite systems.

Dr. Whitehead had degrees in engineering and management but little knowledge of communications when in 1970 he was appointed the first director of the old White House Office of Telecommunications Policy. Considered bright and able, he said his chief concern was trying to get the federal government to become "more anticipatory" in addressing rapid technological changes.

During his four years overseeing the office, he sought to demolish the monopoly model that had given tremendous power to large international corporations such as Comsat and Intelsat. He set in motion policies that allowed domestic satellite competitors to succeed, and far more cheaply.

His work had an enormous impact on the cable industry, which because of his efforts could get its own programming channels via satellites to a national audience. Before, that reach was impossible unless a cable channel wanted to lease land lines from the monopoly provider AT&T.

HBO, the Turner cable networks and C-Span were among the key beneficiaries of Dr. Whitehead's decisions.

Henry Geller, a Washington telecommunications lawyer and Federal Communications Commission general counsel, said Dr. Whitehead "changed the entire landscape of television in the United States and throughout the world" by advocating an "open skies" policy toward domestic satellites.

Geller said Dr. Whitehead "stopped the FCC cold, which was still promoting Comsat as a domestic monopoly. Satellite service became more competitive, allowing such companies as RCA and Hughes to achieve greater innovations more cheaply."

Dr. Whitehead was credited with formulating policies that gave more autonomy to local stations in the public broadcasting system, which was seen by some PBS executives as an attack on the service in large part because of Dr. Whitehead's early reputation for antagonizing the press.

Advertisement



He called network television news a haven for "ideological plugola" and "elitist gossip." His criticisms extended to the public broadcasting system, which he called a "fourth network" for alleged liberal biases.

He apologized before a Senate committee, saying his own comments "did not serve a very useful purpose."

Clay Thomas Whitehead, was born Nov. 13, 1938, in Neodesha, Kan., and raised in Columbus, Kan.

An early interest in astronomy led him to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he received a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering in 1960 and doctorate in management in 1967.

He was a Rand Corp. economist before joining the Nixon team in 1968 as an expert on budget policies. He also helped create the Office Telecommunications Policy, which was folded into the Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration during the Carter administration.

In 1979, Dr. Whitehead became the founding president of Los Angeles-based Hughes Communications, a satellite-manufacturing subsidiary of Hughes Aircraft Co. His greatest achievement was the Galaxy program of commercial communications satellites, which addressed the needs of a rapidly growing cable television market.

He likened the Galaxy program to a mall with an "anchor tenant," such as HBO. Each subsequent company would buy a piece of the satellite. This approach made enormous profits for Hughes, reportedly \$200 million for the 24 transponders on the Galaxy I that launched in 1983.

"I suppose the thing I like to do most is set things up and make them run," Dr. Whitehead had once told the New York Times. He left Hughes in 1983 because he said he tired of working for a big company.

He spent the next two years laying the financial, technical and political groundwork for a \$180 million enterprise that became SES Astra.

Some European politicians criticized the proposed system as "Coca-Cola satellite" and dismissed it as cultural imperialism, all to protect their government-run television channels.

"I think we're seeing wounded national pride," Dr. Whitehead told Forbes magazine in 1985. "There would be more European programming if a large commercial marketplace already existed there."

SES Astra, in which Luxembourg is a major stakeholder, grew tremendously. Its programming is beamed into more than 65 million homes, and its worth was estimated to be more than \$1 billion.

A contractual dispute led Dr. Whitehead to sue SES Astra and the Luxembourg government for \$600 million. He was consumed by the lawsuit for a decade, until prevailing in 2003. The final agreement was confidential.

Survivors include his wife of 35 years, Margaret Mahon Whitehead of McLean; two children, Dr. Abigail Craine of Lemoore, Calif., and Clay C. Whitehead of San Francisco; and three sisters, Susan Whitehead of Vienna and Nancy Whitehead and Helen Conerly, both of Alpharetta, Ga.

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Former Nixon telecommunications head dies

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July 31, 2008

Former Nixon administration telecommunications guru Clay T. Whitehead has died of prostate cancer in Washington at the age of 69.

Whitehead was perhaps best known for his role in creating the Open Skies policy as director of the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy from 1970 to 1974. His efforts helped lead to a domestic satellite system bringing cable TV systems and reduced-cost long-distance telephone service for millions of Americans.

He was also known for his often controversial attitudes toward media coverage of the Nixon administration, which he referred to in a 1972 speech as “elitist gossip” and “ideological plugola,” The New York Times reported Thursday.

Others, including Thomas Hazlett, a professor of economics and law at George Mason University, emphasize Whitehead's larger role which “spearheaded a deregulatory movement that brought much more liberal rules and far stronger First Amendment protection to the emerging media... . The effect of allowing the new information services to compete in a more open environment set the stage for progress in the technologies to come, including the Internet and cellular.”

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<http://politicom.moldova.org/news/former-nixon-telecommunications-head-dies-138782-eng.html>

Green dorms, cable's creator, etc.

From the Scrapbook.

August 11 - August 18, 2008, Vol. 13, No. 45

How Green Was My Dorm?

Last week the Washington Post offered suggestions on ways students can "go green" in their dorm rooms. As staff writer Jura Koncius notes, "Students this year will be spending about \$600 each for back-to-college products, according to a survey by the National Retail Federation, down 7 percent from 2007, in part because of a faltering economy and \$50,000 annual tuition, room and board at some local private colleges and universities."

Not that this should discourage an incoming freshman from taking advantage of the environmentally friendly products listed, including: "eco-fabric shoe bag made partially from recycled water bottles" (\$29.99), "garment rack made of renewable, sustainable bamboo" (\$129), "Alena pillows woven with sustainably harvested hemp," (\$31.95), "round storage barrel, \$80, and rectangular storage basket, \$60, made of scraps from flip-flop factories," and our favorite, "Smencils, scented pencils made of recycled newspapers" (\$59.99 for 50 Smencils).

Apparently it's going to take a lot of "green," in the sense in which THE SCRAPBOOK understood that word back in the previous century, to "go green" in the up-to-date sense of the term. But really, What student is going to spend \$60 for pencils that smell? On the other hand, we have a sneaking suspicion that some of those pillows are going to be smoked.

The Man Who Brought Us Cable

Clay Whitehead died last week, at the comparatively early age of 69, after a long battle with cancer. His name is not likely to resonate with the public, but Whitehead was one of those people, briefly in public life, whose influence was decisive, even historic--and decidedly benign.

An MIT-trained engineer and administrator, he was the first director of the old White House Office of Telecommunications Policy, during the Nixon administration, where his agile brain and conservative politics antagonized the Democratic Congress and Washington press corps of the late 1960s and early '70s. But it was Whitehead who fought for, and achieved, a market-based "open skies" policy for communications satellites and cable television licenses, ending the monopolies controlled by the federal government, and leading to competition, variety, and abundance on the airwaves.

The televised world we inhabit today--hundreds of channels, C-SPAN, Classic Arts Showcase, ESPN, Turner Classic Movies, the Weather Channel, Fox News, Animal Planet, you name it--is made possible by the work of this smart, personable, dedicated man whose premature death we note with regret.

Sentences We Didn't Finish

"'I have always loved longitude,' Nancy Pelosi says before breaking into laughter. 'I love latitude; it's in the stars. But longitude, it's about time . . .'" ("Pelosi: 'I'm trying to save the planet,'" Politico, July 29, 2008)

Mistaken Identity

THE SCRAPBOOK, which is sometimes mistaken for a Diarist or an Editor's Note, sends its condolences to Harvard's president--who is also Harvard's first woman president--Drew Gilpin Faust.

In the July 23 edition of the Times Literary Supplement, editor Peter Stothard wrote a brief item about President Faust's recent book on death in the Civil War, which has just been published in Britain, explaining that "he applies the same process of demythology . . . that Paul Fussell applied to the First World War and Nicholson Baker has just attempted for the Second" (see Page 37 for our review of Baker). Which is all very well, of course--except that, as noted, Drew Gilpin Faust is a she, not a he.

Now, you would think, THE SCRAPBOOK believes, that the editor of the Times Literary Supplement would know the name of the president of Harvard University, as well as the interesting fact that the president is a woman. But then again, would he? It is true that, in the past, certain college presidents in America were minor celebrities (Robert Maynard Hutchins, Chicago) or famous for their gravitas and longevity (Nicholas Murray Butler, Columbia). But nowadays they seem to come and go with the swift regularity of Italian prime ministers, even at such high-octane institutions as Harvard. Quick! Name the presidents of Yale and Princeton! See what THE SCRAPBOOK means?

The crisis in American higher education is not just in curriculum, or political correctness, or moral relativism on campus, but in the fact that the national stature of college presidents ain't what it used to be, and that yesterday's leaders in education, civic responsibility, and public morality, are today's fundraisers and arbiters of faculty parking space.

(Answers: Richard C. Levin, Shirley M. Tilghman)

Sentences We Didn't Finish, II

"IGNATIUS: Zbig, few people in America have lived with the tumult of the Iranian revolution in quite the way that you have. You were national security advisor to President Carter at the time of the revolution. You struggled with the horrific months of the seizure of the U.S. Embassy and the hostage crisis. What are your starting points? How do you see the strategic issues?

"BRZEZINSKI: Well, my starting point would be somewhat . . . " (America and the World: Conversations on the Future of American Foreign Policy, by Zbigniew Brzezinski and Brent Scowcroft, moderated by David Ignatius)

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