

MARGARET WALSON, CO-FOUNDER OF SERVICE ELECTRIC CABLE TELEVISION, DIES



Margaret Walson, considered, along with her late husband John, to be the founder of Cable Television, has died. Walson died Wednesday in Boca Raton, Florida, at home.

Margaret Walson was born Margaret Kowatch, in Hazelbrook, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania and attended West Mahanoy Township School, graduating from Barrington High School, in New Jersey.

She was always an active member of Saint Mary's Byzantine Catholic Church in Mahanoy City, PA and Saint Michael's Byzantine Church in Allentown, PA.

Margaret married John Walson while he was a lineman working for PP&L Electric, and they opened an appliance store together, selling stoves, refrigerators and all kinds of furnishings for the home.

Margaret took care of the store while John worked as a lineman. When television sets became available, John invented Cable Television as a means to market and sell them in his appliance store. Eventually, the appliance store closed and Cable Television became the family business.

Margaret continued to be an integral part of Service Electric, assisting John as a personal secretary and advisor, playing an important role in the growth and development of the business. Following his death in 1993, Margaret continued to play an active role as an executive of the Corporation, advising her children.

"Pennsylvania's cable family is saddened by the loss of a dear friend and true industry pioneer," said Dan Tunnell, BCAP President. "Margaret Walson's legacy will endure and remain a permanent, important chapter in the birth of cable television. She will be very much missed."

Margaret always had a keen eye for architecture and interior decoration, and played an integral role in the design and development of corporate and personal properties. Margaret also loved traveling the world, and fine dining.

Additionally, Margaret had the opportunity to become a professional singer, and once sang with Frank Sinatra at the Lakewood Ballroom. Although she decided to give up her musical career to devote time to building the Cable TV business and raising her family, she still enjoyed singing and dancing, right up until the time of her death.

Margaret was a recipient of an honorary doctorate degree from Muhlenberg College for her many accomplishments in the Cable TV industry.



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The country's chief telecommunications regulator defended the use of secret meetings during merger reviews, in response to criticism from Comcast Corp. and a U.S. senator in recent weeks.

In an open letter Wednesday, Tom Wheeler, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, said the FCC has allowed for parties to discuss concerns about a transaction privately since "at least 1997" under a rule that provides a "limited opportunity" to those who don't want to comment publicly "due to fear of possible reprisal or retribution." Mr. Wheeler pointed out that there are also other ways that companies can present their concerns to the FCC without disclosing their meetings publicly, including by visiting the agency after a transaction is announced but before the public comment period begins.

He was responding to a letter sent last week by Sen. Dean Heller (R., Nev.) requesting information regarding any confidential meetings the FCC has had with media companies as part of its review of the pending AT&T Inc. - DirecTV and Comcast- Time Warner Cable Inc. merger deals. A recent article in The Wall Street Journal disclosed that the FCC was encouraging many of the biggest media companies that have remained relatively silent publicly about the Comcast merger to offer feedback confidentially.

Sen. Heller and Comcast Executive Vice President David Cohen had expressed concern about the prospect of such secret feedback influencing the FCC's decision about a merger. Mr. Wheeler emphasized Wednesday that the FCC "uses only information that is placed on the record" in making a final decision about whether to allow a merger to go through. Mr. Wheeler said the information gathered in any secret meetings could help the agency ask "appropriate questions" to the parties seeking to merge, which could be placed on the record along with the parties' responses. Mr. Wheeler said the rule allowing the secret meetings "could be used as a means of encouraging persons or entities to put their information on the record."

Though Mr. Wheeler didn't give details on what confidential meetings, if any, have transpired, Comcast's Mr. Cohen said the company was satisfied with Mr. Wheeler's clarifications and "comfortable" that the FCC's procedures "will ensure a complete and fair review." Mr. Cohen said Comcast is "encouraged with the Commission's assurance that any evidence adduced through any private sessions will be made part of the record so that we and other parties have an opportunity to respond." Sen. Heller said he appreciates that Mr. Wheeler's letter underscored "the need for transparency on public orders so they can stand on their own merit." – *Wall Street Journal*

About one in four households in Western Pennsylvania lacks a computer with Internet access, which is comparable to the ratios for the state and nation, according to census figures released on Thursday.

The statistics don't show how many of those households have school-age children but estimate that about 12 percent of people younger than 18 in the region lack a computer with Internet access. That's slightly better than the rates for the state (15 percent) and the United States (19 percent). The numbers show that 12 percent of Allegheny County children lack a computer with Internet access. "It's surprisingly low," said Jon Amelio, chief technology officer for the Allegheny Intermediate Unit. "We still have room to improve. ... I would have thought it was 20 to 25 percent."

The Allegheny Intermediate Unit provides training and support for all 42 suburban school districts in the county as well as Internet access. About 70 to 80 percent of the teachers in those districts incorporate the Internet into their lessons or homework, Amelio said. The figures come from the Census' American Community Survey, which annually measures household income, education levels, commuting times and several other demographics. This is the first year the survey has provided local numbers on computer use and Internet access.

The survey's definition of a computer encompasses desktop computers, laptops, notebooks, smartphones and tablets. The Internet numbers include both dial-up and broadband services. An increasing number of school districts are using the Internet to keep parents up to date on their children's progress at school, another advantage that home access provides, Amelio said. "It certainly would be great to have matching Internet connectivity at home," he said.

The lack of home Internet access is an important issue for low-income communities, but it takes on critical importance for students, said Bill Bartlett, regional director for Action United, a nonprofit that helps needy families. "If you're not plugged in, and you're in the younger generation, you're being left out," he said. – *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*

The Cameron County Commissioners on Wednesday voted to accept the recommendation of MCM Consulting Group Inc. on a provider for the new VOIP phone service at the courthouse. Three proposals were received, with the one submitted by Zito Media receiving approval due to its lower cost and added benefits.

Zito's proposal was approximately \$25,000 less expensive, and the system is considered more economical because the courthouse would not have its own equipment nor function as a stand-alone site as was the case previously. Hosting of equipment will be on Zito Media property, and a technician is provided to remedy any problems in a timely manner, rather than waiting for someone to respond to the courthouse and incurring additional fees.

The commissioners spoke with Elk County staff while in Ridgway this week, and learned the county is very happy with its service, also purchased through Zito Media. North Central staff are also available to help with any set up issues. Previously, the service was purchased through Windstream, and the courthouse had a stand-alone system. With the new system, county offices located outside the walls of the courthouse can also be linked.

MCM Consulting has worked on communications systems within the county before, having facilitated the joinder of Cameron County with 12 other Pennsylvania counties for purposes of the 911 system. The new system saves all involved counties a significant amount of money, along with adding redundancy and emergency options within the system. – *Bradford Era*



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