

# From party lines to Pokémon GO

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Alongside The New Zealand Herald's 'Who Am I' series, partner Spark uncovers how the telephone has changed through the generations by talking to kiwis who were there.



Photo / Thinkstock

Party lines. Collect calls. 137.

If this all sounds like another language, you're not alone. But to Kiwis of a certain age such terms were as important as 'unlimited texting' and 'free wifi' are today. The way we communicate has changed drastically, and so have our phones.

But who remembers their first?

### Jennie Oakley, 77, Auckland

When I was a child in Hastings in the 1940s our phone number was 2666.

All phones seemed to be black in those days and ours was no exception. Its cord was only about a metre long, unlike the portable ones today.

We had our own line, but I remember my grandmother didn't. Her phone was in a wooden box with a metal handle on the side with a mouthpiece to speak into at the front. You had to turn the handle to ring the exchange to be put through to the desired number.

These were the days of the infamous 'party lines,' where ten or more households shared the same network. Each household had their own ring. Half the fun of it was hearing other people's conversations!

When my husband and I moved to Auckland in 1961 he was sent to Australia for business. Whenever he rang home we would be connected via a tolls lady. 'Your turn to talk, Maam!' she'd say. Can you imagine having a stranger sitting there listening to every word you said!

I have an Android smartphone now and simply love it.

### Pete Martin, 53, Papakura

We had two phones, one in the kitchen and other in Ma and Pa's bedroom. The first was a dial phone, and the second a sleek, boomerang shaped thing that had actual buttons.

Dad used the phone a lot for rugby coaching and running his own business. But he kept his conversations short and simple and always answered the same way: 'Are you there!'

Course I'm here, where else would I be!

In 1975 my wife was in form two and struggling to find information for her project on the Himalayas. She followed her mum's advice and tracked down Sir Edmund Hillary in the phone book. Ed the legend answered, and spent 45 minutes answering all of her questions.

### Zabe Orchard, 42, Wellington

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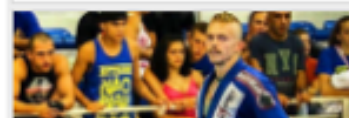


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