

... Herwer keeps hearing bells

Tom Herwer doesn't have to ask "For whom the bell tolls." He knows. It tolls for him. Herwer, a PBX installer-maintainer supervisor in West Los Angeles, is an antique phone collector. His collection numbers about 75 phones, most of which cover the den walls of his Torrance home.

His first telephone was an 1896 LM Ericsson wooden wall phone he received as a Christmas gift.

"It was in rough condition, so I decided to clean it up. I refinished the wood and renickedled the bells. When it was finished I wanted another," Herwer explained.

His second was an antique American wall phone he purchased for \$10. That's how it

started — and has continued for some 13 years, resulting in a collection valued at \$28,000.

"My oldest phone is what's called a William's Coffin, which got its name because of its shape. It dates back to 1878 — only two years after Bell invented the telephone," Herwer said.

He bought it last year from a collector in Missouri for \$850, which is the most he's ever paid for a phone.

"At the time, the phone was worth about \$4,000, but it was part of a package deal in which I bought 100 phones. Today the phone is worth about \$4,500 and is the most valuable in my collection."

Herwer is also an adviser to the

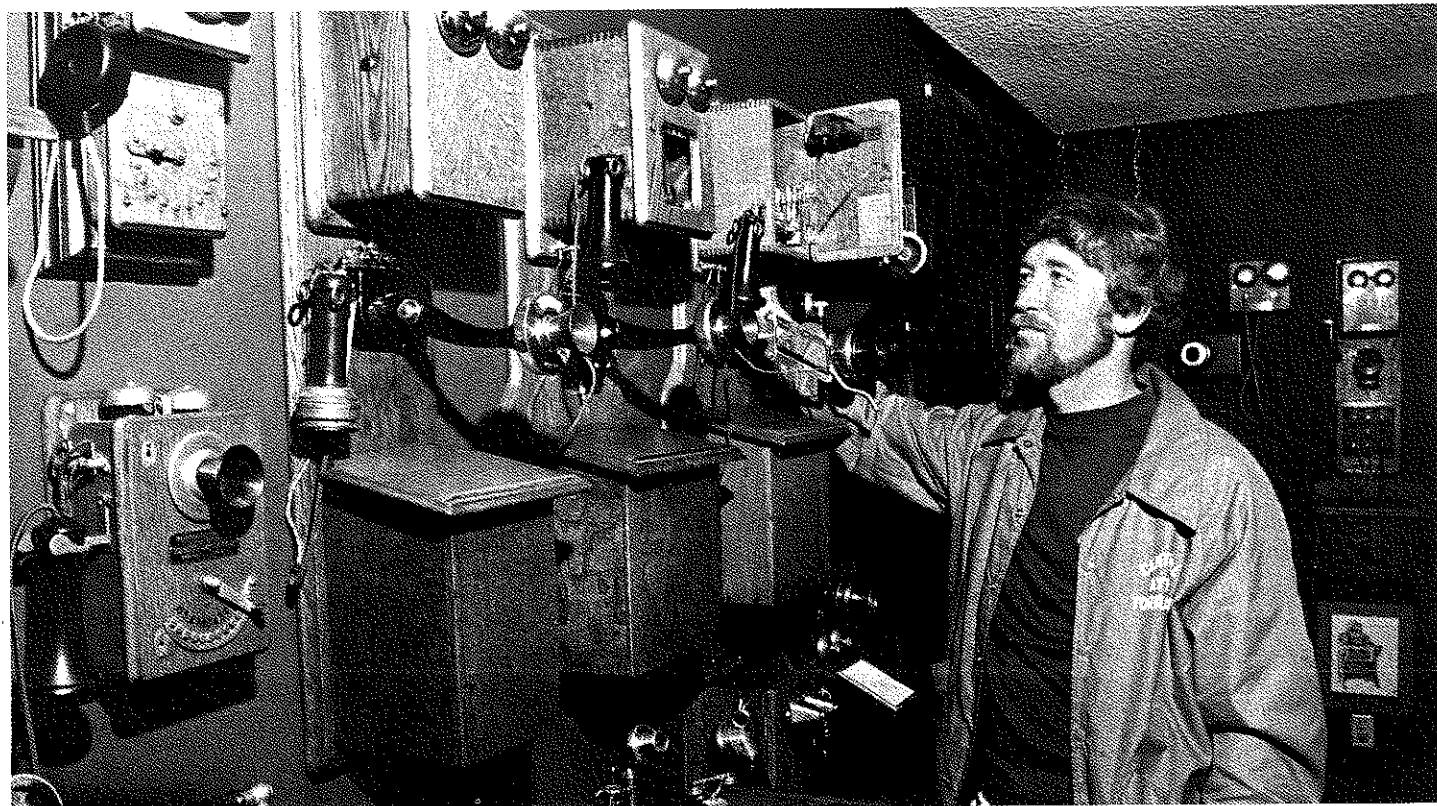
Smithsonian Institute in Washington.

"*Telephony Magazine* did a story on me a while back and the Institute called me and asked if I would like to be an adviser in their electronic, telephone and radio section."

The Smithsonian refers people who have questions about antique phones to Herwer. Inquiries usually center around the age and value of a particular phone.

"I do the research and send the information back to them," he explained.

Herwer is also serving a second term as board chairman of the Antique Telephone Collectors Association, headquartered in Kansas.



ABOVE — Tom Herwer's telephones come in all shapes and sizes. Displayed are a variety of wooden wall phones.

LEFT — Herwer demonstrates Kellogg switchboard complete with head-