

Chapter One: Seven Steps to Heaven

It has been said that card games are more reflective of life than board games. This is because with board games everything is on the table for everyone to see. There are no surprise holdings, and nothing left to chance. It is all about strategy and wit.

In card games, the element of chance is involved with regard to the cards you are dealt. In bridge or whist, for example, no one else knows what is in your hand, neither your partner nor your opponents. If you try to finesse your opponents, you also run the risk of misleading your partner. Anything you communicate with your partner, your opponents can observe also. All in all, card games unfold much like life itself. (It should also be noted that many of the world's leaders, both past and present from various walks of life, are well versed in the card games.)

As individuals, organizations and institutions proceed through their lives, both logic and luck (good and bad) are involved. And both of these dynamics played a part in the series of steps that led to the establishment and evolution of the W.E.B. DuBois Learning Center's Telecommunications Hub (Telehub) Network.

As I look back over the years, reflecting on how the Telehub Network came about, I often find myself drawn to musing on thoughts of "Seven Steps to Heaven."



"Seven Steps to Heaven" is one of the classic tunes by Miles Davis. It is on his album of the same title. In it a recurring refrain is played that has seven prominent notes, with the last three played in a rapid succession.

It seems as though development of the DLC's Telehub Network played out in a similar fashion.



[Step 1: The Survey]

It was on a brisk autumn Saturday afternoon in 1982 that Lisa Bond and Cornell Perry, Jr., two students of the W.E.B. DuBois Learning Center (DLC), met with two of the Center's instructors, Ajamu Webster and Michael Brian, both young engineers in their twenties at the time— Webster was a civil and Brian was a mechanical engineer. They all gathered there to survey the acreage containing the building that was to eventually become the property of the Center.

It was the Leon Jordan Memorial Scholarship Fund owned the property at that time. The Fund was the brainchild of attorney Harold "Doc" Holliday, Jr. Holliday was a legislator of Jackson County (where the Learning Center resides) when he became aware of some monies that each legislator could award to its constituency. He conceived the idea of getting the other legislators of the urban core to pool their allotment and establish a fund to give scholarships to deserving youth. The fund was named after one

of the founders of Freedom Inc., a political organization of the predominately Black wards in Kansas City, Missouri.

The property, formerly the Spofford Home for Boys, was donated to the Leon Jordan Scholarship fund as a tax write-off. I was the chairman of the DLC, and also a member of Freedom, Inc. I approached Phil Curls, its president, about the Center using the facility to tutor kids. He readily agreed to the request. (It is interesting to note, that Fred Curls, Phil's father, who is the sole surviving founder of Freedom, Inc. attended Kansas City's historic Lincoln high School with my father, Leon Dixon, Sr., back in the 1930's.)

In order for the property to be used for Freedom, Inc.'s desired purposes, the city had to re-zone the area it was in. That also entailed getting the property surveyed. Webster conferred with me about saving Freedom some money by letting him perform the survey. I asked Phil if the DLC staffers could do it for them. He agreed, and I told Webster that it was OK. Michael Brian also agreed to help out. Webster got permission from the architectural firm where he worked, Burns and McDonnell, to use their equipment for the job. (Brian worked for the Bendix, now Honeywell Corp.)

Webster and Brian asked Lisa and Cornell, Jr. (Cornell Perry, Sr. was employed at Bendix and tutored in our math program) if they would like to work on the project. They were both freshmen in Lincoln High School at the time. Cornell, Jr. was taking Algebra I. Lisa (I knew her father who worked at Bendix in security) had been coming to the Center since she was in the second grade, and had made tremendous progress in her mathematics sessions. As a result, we recommended to the school district that she be permitted to take Algebra I when she entered the seventh grade. And they complied. Consequently, she was in Algebra II when they did the survey. Both Cornell, Jr. and Lisa eagerly took up the challenge and looked forward to the opportunity.

After their survey was completed, Webster wrote it up and presented the report to Phil Curls, saving Freedom, Inc. over two thousand dollars. Later, Phil asked, "Do y'all have that kind of talent working in the Center?" To which I replied, "Yep, and then some." The zoning was approved and the Leon Jordan Scholarship Fund could now operate, using the property as it had planned.

The best way to acquire knowledge is to be around it. Lisa and Cornell, Jr. continued attending mathematics session at the Learning Center throughout their high school years. It is noteworthy to point out that Cornell, Jr. had been tutored Algebra I by Robert McKinnie, an electrical engineering graduate from Tennessee State University. When Lisa was in Algebra I, Brigida Hall (who would soon marry her college sweetheart Terrance Goree, an accountant) tutored her. Hall was a mechanical engineering graduate from Southern University. Both Hall and McKinnie were employed at the Bendix Corp.

Not only were Lisa and Cornell, Jr. outstanding students; they were also outstanding varsity basketball players. Consequently, they were able to acquire academic/athletic scholarships to Prairie View A&M University, where they graduated in the very same fields as their "mentors," mechanical and electrical engineering, respectively.

That offering of helping the Scholarship Fund obtain their survey report which enabled them to secure the desired zoning for the area in which the property was located would lead to interesting consequences.

[Step 2: The Property Acquisition]

I had been a member of Freedom, Inc. for several years and already had good relationships with its members and leadership. Now, due in part to the survey, positive relationships began to grow and develop between the prime movers of both Freedom and the DLC.

Phil Curls, who was a Missouri state senator, was considered by many to be one of Kansas City's most astute politicians. But Freedom, in addition to its responsibilities of overseeing the political concerns of its constituencies, as well as the day-to-day responsibilities of its organization, now had the added responsibilities of a building sitting on four and a half acres. Freedom had a lot on its plate given all that was going on at that time. Overseeing that building and property was beginning to take its toll on the organization and was diverting much of its energy away from its most pressing concerns.

One evening Ajamu Webster, who was from Los Angeles, had brought an old high school friend, Akil Liggins, by my house to listen to some jazz albums. Now I am an avid jazz buff and Akil was a bass player. Ajamu was in high school during the wake of the civil rights era. While there, he used to attend sessions at the US Organization, which was headed up by the cultural nationalist, Maulana Karenga. So while we were spending time discussing "the movement," we were also consuming the lush tones of Buster Williams and power lines of Cecil McBee (two of my most highly regarded bass players) when the phone rang. It was Phil Curls. He was asking me about the possibility of the Learning Center taking over ownership of the building. Webster, overhearing what was being discussed, motioned to Akil for quiet. Since Ajamu was a young civil engineer whose emphasis was on structures, the possibility of the DLC acquiring a building was more than a thrilling possibility for him. A few weeks prior, Curls had asked me if the DLC had tax-exempt status. I told him that it did without giving it much thought. Now it was becoming clear to me why he had asked. Curls told me that he was coming right over to discuss the possibilities. Then, I called Bill Grace, the other co-founder and executive director of the DLC, to come over right away. After listening to the proposition, we all decided to take it to the DLC board. The senior Curls, who was also a real estate broker, presented the proposition and discussed the details for transfer of the property. The DLC board voted unanimously to accept the arrangements for the transfer, which took place in December of 1983.

The W.E.B. DuBois Learning Center had been operating out of churches since its founding in 1973. It was tutoring school-aged children in math, reading and science. It had moved the math sessions to the building operated by Freedom Inc. in 1982. Beginning with the 1985-86 school year, all of its tutoring sessions were moved to the facility it had now acquired.

New undreamt of challenges and opportunities were on the horizon for the DLC.

[Step 3: The Computer Lab]

By the mid 1980's computer technology was beginning to work its way into the public's consciousness. The country was getting increasingly concerned about its ability to graduate more of its youth, especially inner-city youth, who were literate in mathematics, science and now computer technology. The Allied Signal Aerospace Corp. (which had bought out Bendix) established a Challenge 2000 program to address this concern. It seemed as though the requirements were written with the DuBois Learning Center in mind.

Allied Signal's president, Louis Smith (whom I had become friends with when he was first hired) was familiar with the DLC and was helpful in securing a grant for \$25,000 to help it establish a computer laboratory. Jimmie Banks (whom I also became friends with when he too was first hired) was assigned to coordinate the task.

The establishment of the computer lab raised the DLC's operation to newer heights. Danita Brewer, a chemical engineer who tutored geometry, offered to head up the computer section. Keith Rainey, our chief financial officer and avid computer user, also took on some of the responsibility for setting up and running the lab. So now the DLC had a Computer Department in addition to its Math, Reading and Science Departments. The science department was established by the late Joshua Salary, a chemistry graduate from Alabama State A&M University, who also ran the chemistry laboratory at Bendix.

People have always been curious as to how the Learning Center has been able to acquire the volunteers for its programs. It's a little bit like "build it and they will come." However, a comment that Rev. Herbert Daughtry, the former chairman of the National Black United Front, made is even more definitive of the dynamic. What he pointed out was that: "People don't join organizations—people join people."

Harrison Caldwell May was an Allied Signal employee who had earlier decided to go back to school to upgrade his education. While taking a course that required an understanding of matrix theory, he approached me for some help. He came to the Learning Center and after I helped clarify a few concepts for him, he was off and running. A few years later (in the mid-nineties) I stopped by his desk and asked him how he was doing. In the process I told him how the DLC had acquired a computer lab and had established a computer program. Harrison then proceeded on a discourse on what could be done to help our kids with that capability. Upon seeing his interest and enthusiasm, I seized upon the opportunity to invite him to help out in our computer department.

Now Harrison's mother, Margaret May, was a classmate of mine. I have known both of Harrison's parents since childhood. Harrison's father, Walter, Sr., and his brother Vincent were also employed at Allied Signal. Moreover, several of the DLC's volunteer tutors, as you may have noticed, were Allied Signal employees. So when Harrison came on board, he was already well acquainted with many of them. It also so happens that Harrison May and Keith Rainey were classmates at Kansas City's Southeast High School.

It turned out that Harrison was well versed in Information Technology and was working at the time in the Information Systems Networking section of Allied Signal. Keith was thrilled to have his old high school classmate involved with the Learning Center, especially since his knowledge of computer technology was as advanced as it was. By then, Danita had relocated to another city. So Keith encouraged Harrison to take charge of our computer department, and he willingly accepted.

Little did we know then what lay ahead for the W.E.B. DuBois Learning Center.

[Step 4: The Internet Protocol]

Many times new ideas for new directions result from casual conversations. One such idea resulted from a casual conversation I had with Harrison May. During that casual discussion, I remember telling him how we originally felt as though the Learning Center concept would catch on in the community, and that there would be several of them in our churches. But that did not happen. Harrison then said to me, "I know how we can do it." I gave him a puzzling look. He began explaining various ways how the Learning Center could take advantage of the Internet and Information Technology to benefit the work we were trying to do with our kids and the community. From what he was expressing I was moved to ask, "Do you know how to administer an Internet network?" "Yeah," he answered. "Wait a minute." I said as I pondered. "You mean to tell me that if we had the equipment to offer an Internet, e-mail and website service, you know how to run it?" "Yeah," he replied.

My head was buzzing. I began to think about what all this could lead to and what needed to be done to establish such a capability within the Learning Center. I first talked it over with Vern Glover, the vice chairman of the DLC and now the director of Information Technology for the Department of Agriculture in Kansas City. He thought that it was something we could do, and should do, especially if we had someone who could oversee it.

He then took it upon himself to talk with Harrison. After their conversation, in which they exchanged comments on Information Technology, Glover, with flaring and piercing eyes, later exclaimed to me: "Dick, I'd hire him in a heartbeat!"

The other "tech" folks at the DLC were easily convinced that we should take this project on. My concern was convincing the "non-tech" folks. There wasn't enough time to do an all out sells job. It would just take too long to get them to understand all of this Internet "tech" stuff at that time. So, I went to my old buddy, Bill Grace, and simply said: "Grace, you're just going to have to go along with us on this. I know you don't really understand what all we are talking about. But it's like what that old Negro spiritual says, "You'll understand it better by and by."

This same comment was made to the other DLC non-tech folks. The DLC was fortunate that the non-tech folks had such confidence in us tech folks to go along with a proposition like this, especially since we were so gung-ho about it. The question now was: How were we going to go about obtaining the resources to proceed?

ENTER THE MILLION MAN MARCH (MMM)! Many of the Learning Center's prime movers were also prime movers in the Kansas City chapter of the Nation Black

United Front (NBUF)—including charter members Bill Grace; Ajamu Webster, now the chairman of the KC chapter, and me. NBUF-KC was active in the organization of the MMM in Kansas City. Before the MMM was held, there had been a contentious school board election pitting NBUF-KC members against some of the members of Freedom, Inc. But after the election was all over, and given the spirit around the concept of the March, several members of Freedom, Inc. decided to attend the MMM. As a result of the camaraderie that was established, the Freedom and NBUF members desired to come together so that they could better benefit our community. The Chairman of Freedom, Inc., Rev. James Tindall, approached the NBUF guys to see how we could work together. They told him of the goals and aspirations of the Center's Telehub Network project. Rev. Tindall then informed them about some monies available where the resources could be obtained to implement the desired project we were seeking to pull together.

The W.E.B. DuBois Learning Center now decided to proceed, full-stem-ahead, with the project.

[Step 5: The Coming of Key Talent]

The Learning Center's initial objectives were to be able to host web pages for community-based organizations and provide e-mail capabilities to staffers and students.

Earl Baker an old childhood friend of mine and a long time DLC supporter, spoke to one of his acquaintances, Gary Gorman, about the project. Gorman was a self-starter who had a keen interest in learning more about what was going on with Information Technology (IT). At that time he was unemployed, and began to work closely with Harrison and quickly began developing his understanding of the technology. This would later enable to him find work in this field. Gary worked hand in hand with Harrison in the initial phases to get things up and running. One-by-one we began to host web pages for various churches, community organizations, and some community based businesses. It is interesting to note that one such business, Leon's Supermarket, had a surprising and pleasant experience as a result.

I had known the owners, Leon Stapleton and his wife Willosa, whom I had worked with in a local supermarket while I was a high school teen-ager. Even they didn't know that much about the Internet at that time (mid nineties). However, they went along with the idea of us developing and hosting a web presence for them. One day while I was in the store, Leon told me that he had received a long distance call from a representative of a national organization of Black supermarket owners. He asked Leon how long had he been in business. To which he answered, "since 1968." When he told him that, the caller said that he was "the Jackie Robinson" of Black supermarket owners and that he had been in business longer than all of their members. Leon was invited to attend their convention where he received a special recognition.

Little by little, things began to take shape and grow. With our growth came the need for more support and help. Recall that I mentioned some support for us that resulted from the Million Man March (MMM). Also in that March were two "brothers" who would join us, Ronald Craddolph, Jr. and Christopher "Chris" Thompson.

Ajamu Webster had by this time established his own civil and structural engineering firm, DuBOIS Consultants, Inc., that was located down the street from the Learning Center. Kevin Perry, who was a former president of the Black Chamber of Commerce, had his Information Technology business, Newspaper Electronics, housed in the DuBOIS Consultant's office building. Ron, Kevin and Ajamu all knew each other from their association in Kansas City's Black Chamber of Commerce. Ron went on the MMM and engaged in dialogue with them. There he learned about the happenings at the DLC. Upon his return from the March, he decided to follow up on Webster's suggestion to call me.

I can recall aspects of that conversation when I found out about Ron's background in IT and that he was a business manager at SBC. I proceeded to tell him about Harrison and that he would be able to follow his conversations about what the Center was doing, although most of the people Harrison tried to explain things to got lost in that technological jargon that he inevitably would lapse into. Ron would later remark that he "couldn't wait to meet this brother that nobody could talk to." Ron and Harrison hit it off very well. They became quite a team. They began to develop IT classes to teach to youth as well as adults.

I had also been studying how to develop web pages which would enabled me to contribute in that regard. However, the way things were at that time, I had to e-mail my work to Harrison and he would post it. Needless to say that Harrison soon tired of that additional work. So he searched and found some software that would allow me to upload the pages that I would write to the server myself. He and Ron went through it, familiarizing themselves with it operations. Ron then proceeded to show me how to operate it. When I saw how easy it was to operate, I said to Ron, with Harrison in earshot, "You mean that I can upload my web pages from home as simple as this?" "Yep," he smilingly said. I leaned back smiling and said: "I'm dangerous now. Y'all don't know what y'all just did. I know what to put out there on our website." They just laughed. And I thought to myself, "I don't think they know what they have just unleashed." "That's what we want you to do." Ron Said. "Have fun." In hindsight I realize that they simply wanted me out of their hair.

Now as for Chris Thompson. Chris attended Southeast High School with both Harrison and Keith Rainey. He was two years behind them. Chris' and Harrison's fathers new each other from childhood. Chris worked at one time with Mickey Dean who was the director of Human Resources for Kansas City, Missouri, a NBUF-KC member and tutor in math at the Center. Chris by then had become a manager of Human Resources for Sprint, the telecommunications corporation whose headquarters are in the Greater Kansas City Area.

At Mickey Dean's suggestion, Chris attended the Million Man March. There he too experienced the camaraderie and spirit of the MMM. Although Mickey had been trying to get him to visit the Learning Center previously, Chris now felt the urgency to become more involved with the community. So he decided that he should follow up on Mickey's suggestion. Almost as soon as he got there, he and Harrison began talking and exchanging thoughts and ideas. They would continue with this kind of dialogue whenever Chris came to the Center. At one point, in one of his visits, in one of their conversations Harrison broke in and said, "Why don't you get Sprint to give us a T1 line?" To which Chris replied, "Write me a proposal." Chris should have known better

than to ask Harrison that! But he was serious about him writing a proposal. Harrison got to work. After Harrison presented him with his proposal, Chris got busy setting things in motion.

[Step 6: The Internet Service Provider]

Chris Thompson would often say to me that I probably knew his father, Willie Thompson. And I would always tell him that I couldn't recall a Willie Thompson. Then one day he referred to him as "Weasel." I blurted out, "Weasel?" I told him that "everybody in town knows Weasel. Your daddy was one of those guys that everybody knows, but nobody knows his name."

Weasel was a popular, athletic, street-wise person. For a time he worked as a barber in one of Kansas City's most popular hair saloons, the Sportsmen House of Coiffeurs (owned by Ralph Brown, a long time Learning Center supporter). His presence there was as entertaining as it was engaging. Chris often talks about how his father would always discuss life experiences, sharing his folk wisdom and knowledge with him.

Chris seems to have inherited his people skills from his father. He seems to have employed them as he set about trying to interest the appropriate people at Sprint in giving some consideration to Harrison's proposal. Chris was able to set up a meeting with Bill Washington, Sprint's Human Relation's manager (?), so that we could make a presentation.

The persons chosen to make the presentation were Ron Craddolph, Harrison May and myself. Now Ron is a person who has that innate ability to deliver a smooth, clear presentation. Therefore he was designated to be the main presenter. Harrison, who is quick witted and known to give concise answers, was to provide technical backup support. And I was there to provide background information on the workings of the DLC.

With our Power Point presentation we spelled out how we would, using wireless technology, like to:

1. Provide Internet access for our community by establishing satellite centers in area churches and community centers.
2. Provide access to software housed on the servers at the DLC to the satellites centers by for their use.
3. Free-up the satellite centers from the responsibility of having to obtain, maintain and upgrade hardware and software.

We had big dreams. We would, in effect, become an Applications Service Provider (ASP). We wanted to establish five centers in the first phase, around fifteen in the second and eventually get up to about fifty or sixty in the third. After we finished with our presentation, Bill Washington leaned back in his chair and said that what we were talking about was a huge project. It would require about three million-dollars to accomplish it. This concept would require more than what Sprint alone could do and that we would have to engage other corporate sponsors.

Things just don't always go smoothly. Bill Grace, cofounder and executive director of the DLC, has always been a community activist. And as such he has ruffled a few feathers of some influential civic leaders. However, we all knew what he was like

and how his intense interest in community affairs fuelled his activism. And we were comfortable with that as many of us shared his concerns and some of us even shared his activism. He and I were members of NBUF, along with a few others. Grace was clearly the most visible, although he considered himself switching hats as he engaged in community activism on one hand and functioned as the DLC executive director on the other.

While things were proceeding along, gathering interest for the project, Bill Washington retired from Sprint. Chris now began talking to Dave Thomas, Sprint's director of their foundation for community relations. Dave was aware of Grace's activism and like many members of Kansas City's civic leaders, he had some reservations about becoming involved with an organization with the likes of Bill Grace in the leadership. Up to his point we were a grassroots organization and didn't much rely on too much support from sources outside of our community. Now, however, with this project, we were moving up to another level. We knew we were going to have to do some marketing of our efforts outside of our immediate community.

Now Sprint had set up a call-center inside the urban core near the famous location of 18th and Vine. The lady who was in charge of it was a friend of Bill Grace. She had turned to him to help her set up training programs and procedures. Grace, always willing to help someone trying to do something that will benefit our community, rose to the occasion. We put the word out so that it would be known to the folks at Sprint how Grace unselfishly, quietly behind the scenes did things that in turn benefited Sprint's efforts to establish their call-center. In addition to that, we talked with Jerry McEvoy, the coordinator of the Upper Room, a program that is housed in the St. Louis Catholic Church that would be a beneficiary of our project. He knew an official in Sprint's financial management and let her know about the good works of the DLC and how this project could allow for even more blessings to flow to the community by enabling the various participating centers to offer more in their programs and projects. He also informed her of how he and Bill Grace worked cooperatively together in their neighborhood organization, The Swope Corridor Renaissance.

However, there was one incident that seemed to be the icing on the cake. Rev. Ralph Crabbe, of Christ the Redeemer African Methodist Episcopal Church, was an avid DLC supporter. Roy Brown, one of his members who tutored math for us in our formative years, had informed him of the DLC. Roy encouraged him to meet with us when he expressed an interest in their church establishing an education outreach program. After we met and I shared some of our concepts with him, we established an ongoing relationship.

Rev. Crabbe was also highly involved in community and civic activities. He had a good relationship with Dave Thomas and invited him to lunch to discuss our project. In the discussion, Dave raised his reservations about Bill Grace. Rev. Crabbe asked him if he thought the project was workable and worthwhile. Dave replied that it was. Rev. Crabbe asked if he thought it would be beneficial to the community. Dave said that he thought it would. To which Rev. Crabbe said, "I don't care if Grace is a communist. If the project makes sense and will benefit the community you should support it."

Not long after that, Dave arranged a meeting with Grace. They hit it off real well. Grace is quite a character, but he doesn't have horns (at least not real big ones). In May

of 1996(?) the Sprint Foundation awarded the W.E.B. DuBois Learning Center a \$100,000 grant to proceed with its Telecommunications Hub project.

An additional benefit of all of this came when Dave encouraged his daughter, Meredith, to pay a visit to the Learning center. It turned out that she worked with the group INROADS, that engaged in community activities. When she became aware that we could use some help with our enrollment, she sent out e-mails to their alumni. One of them who offered to help out was Brandy Lane, a chemical engineering graduate of North Carolina A&T University employed at Aventis Pharmaceuticals. When Bill Grace found out about her background, he told her that our science program was dormant due to the fact the former head, Charles McField, had left town in order to pursue studies to become a minister. Upon hearing that, Brandy readily agreed to help us get our science program up and running again. Needless to say how thrilled we were to have her. It also turned out that we had helped her brother, Eddie R. Lane III, to obtain a scholarship to Prairie View A&M University, where he graduated in electrical engineering. Moreover it turned out also that her mother, Marilyn Hill, worked as an administrator at Knotts Elementary School where my wife Betty Dixon, was a school nurse. So when Brandy came on board she was welcomed with open arms.

[Step 7: The Community IT Network]

There is an old saying that “You have to play the hand that’s dealt you.” It is also often expressed in the saying that “you have go with what you got.”

Earl Baker is one of those persons that are eternal optimists and have a winning way with people. He has an unbelievable network of friends and acquaintances throughout the greater Kansas City area. As he would pass by the building he would see our sign in the yard and wonder what was going on at the Learning Center. One day he decided to drop in. That’s how he first came to the Center. Upon seeing him we began to bring each other up on old times. As he learned what the Center was about, he decided to become involved with us.

As mentioned earlier, Earl belongs to the St. Louis Catholic Church, which is up the street from the Center. Jerry McEvoy, who is over their community outreach, was working on an educational outreach program. The foundation from which they were seeking funds wanted them to check to see if other organizations in the community were doing anything similar. As it turned out, the United Christian Church up the street from them, Covenant Presbyterian Church across the street from them, and the Swope Parkway Church of Christ down the street from them were all doing education activities. Earl brought Jerry to the Learning Center so that he could become aware of our work. And that’s how we got to know him.

What resulted from all of this was the formation of a community-based organization, The Swope Corridor Renaissance (SCR). It was composed of churches, businesses, neighborhood organizations, community based organizations that were operating in our general area of the city. We came together so that we could better work together and for mutual support.

All of these organizations in the SCR were happy for us when received the \$100,000 grant from the Sprint Foundation. However, Harrison had hoped for \$500,000 to accomplish all he had in mind in his original proposal for the first phase of the project. As we sat in our computer lab to discuss the project, Harrison said, "What can we do with only \$100,000?" I answered that we would just have to scale down our plans to something more simple and demonstrate to the community what we are trying to do. Because of our involvement in SCR we already had some churches that were familiar with what we sought to do and wanted to participate. So now we began to set our plan in action.

We assembled a team of professional electricians who worked in setting up the Information Technology wiring infrastructure procedure. They were George Fletcher, who headed up the team, and two brothers, Gerald "Jerry" and Melvin Powell. They would do a walk through of each facility to determine what was needed to best prepare them to be brought onto our Network. The churches were asked to designate some of the youth in their congregations so that we could train them to do the wiring and cabling to network and prepare their facilities to receive the signal from an antenna to be placed atop the Learning Center.

Starting in early June when school was out, George would train them for two weeks in the evenings. Upon completion they would go and wire the churches, which took about another two weeks. Harrison and Ron would constantly monitor the progress of the students' wiring. They installed the software that ran the network and the applications software for the users. They continuously tested the connections and configured the servers. Their responsibility was to be the system administrators for the Network. They were like Duke and Count, "orchestrating" the process.

In the midst of these preparations, Tracy Chatman, one of the first students who we tutored at the Learning Center, called me about helping her church set up a tutoring program. We arranged for her and some members of her church's education committee to meet with us. During that meeting she discovered our plans for establishing our Telecommunications Hub. She got in touch with me later and said that she would like to work with us on the project. Tracy had been working in data processing and saw an interesting opportunity to give back to the community. She became our administrative assistant for the "Telehub" project.

As I recall, I was spending a quiet and peaceful evening, relaxing at home, when my phone rang. It was Tracy. She was excited and happily laughing while telling me that Harrison was ecstatic. I could feel the joy as she told me, "His Network is up and running!"