The U.S. Army Signal Corps Museum and Science Center

A private corporation, The Foundation for the U.S. Army Signal Corps Museum and Science Center Incorporated, plans to construct a multi-million dollar museum and science center that will stand as a lasting symbol to communicators everywhere.

The Signal Corps Band plays a fanfare, the extra large golden scissors are poised, a drum roll starts and as the crowd applauds, Fort Gordon's Post Commander cuts the ribbon. The U.S. Army Signal Corps Museum and Science Center has just been officially opened.

The crowd, which includes many leaders from industry and government, pours into the new multi-million dollar facility. Inside, the crowd does not move quietly or speak only in hushed tones as they would in most museums. For this is a science center where the visitor can touch, experience and learn.

If you are at or plan to be at Fort Gordon, Georgia, in the near future, don't bother looking for this new museum and science center. It hasn't been built yet. But the first steps on the very long road to getting it built have already been taken. These include research into other museums, decisions on what type facility would work best for us and the formation of two separate organizations.

The need for a new museum is obvious to anyone who has visited the present one at Fort Gordon, which is housed in a small WWII era building. It's so small, in fact, that many of the artifacts must be stored in boxes and crates — and cannot, therefore, be viewed by visitors. And there are visitors. Consider, for example, that over 33,000 Signal soldiers, including allied students from more than 40 countries, receive training at Fort Gordon every year. During 1979, 146 General Officers including 5 General Officers from allied nations visited the Home of the Signal Corps. A modern museum which would showcase the history and tradition of the Signal Corps is imperative.

Early in the preliminary work, something became very clear. To tell the complete story of the Signal Corps without also telling the story of its partners in the communications industry would be impossible because so many of the developments and accomplishments were a joint effort. Therefore, the partnership between the Signal Corps and industry will be a major theme in the new museum.

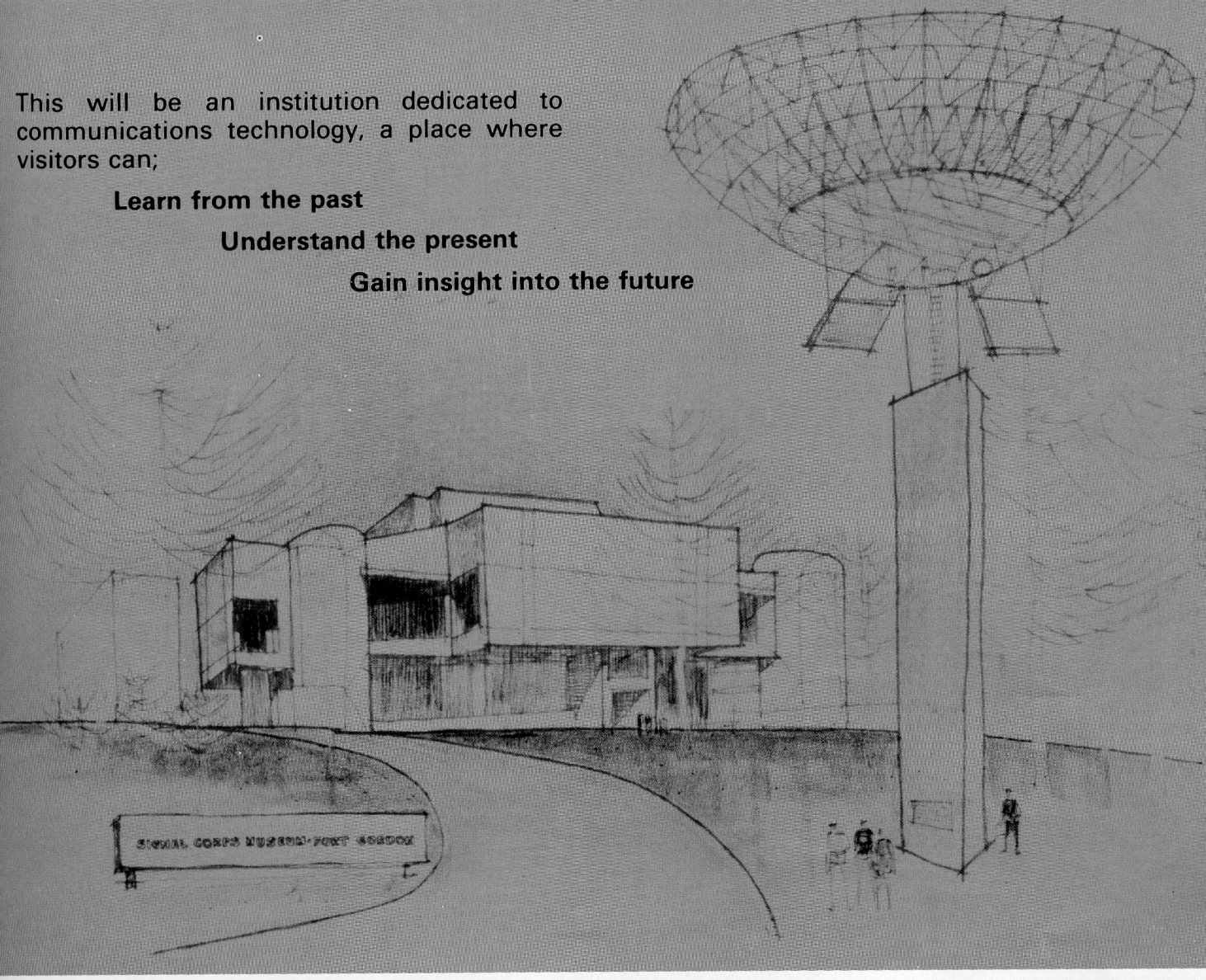
Though communications is central to the development of mankind, to the everyday lives of us all, there is no national museum dedicated to telling its story. With C.B. radios, pocket computers, and

This will be an institution dedicated to communications technology, a place where visitors can;

Learn from the past

Understand the present

Gain insight into the future



by 1st Lt. James M. Kellett

electronic games as common today as listening to the radio was a few years ago, there should be a national museum dedicated to this important part of our lives. The US Army Signal Corps Museum and Science Center plans to fill that need.

The history of the Signal Corps and communications touches many different disciplines: ballooning, aeronautics, meteorology, electronics, photography, television, computers, and more. All will be represented in the museum and their pasts will be explored. In addition to looking to the past, however, the museum will offer a glimpse into the future. What are some of the possibilities in communications? What might be future trends? How will computers continue to revolutionize communications? These questions and more will be explored.

Top museums across the country have a strong commitment to providing the visitor a chance to learn from their exhibits. As the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, S. Dillon Ripley wrote in his "The View from the Castle":

> What do people get out of a visit to our museums? More and more, it seems they are looking for an educational experience.

This attitude has made science centers extremely popular to visitors. The exhibits are designed to provide visitors the opportunity to interact with them, to learn from them, to enjoy them — like a huge laboratory laid out for exploration. Television, film and computers are being used to help the visitor learn and experience. It is in this spirit that the exhibits in the Signal Corps Museum and Science Center will be built.

There are artifacts from the past that obviously cannot be set out for people to interact with — at least not by touching. Yet to put artifacts in glass cases or to stand them alone on the floor often leads to viewer apathy. An exciting alternative which allows the visitor to interact is to build the environment from which the artifact came and to allow the visitor to enter this world.

Other principles will be worked into the design of the Signal Corps Museum and Science Center. For example, patron comfort should not be

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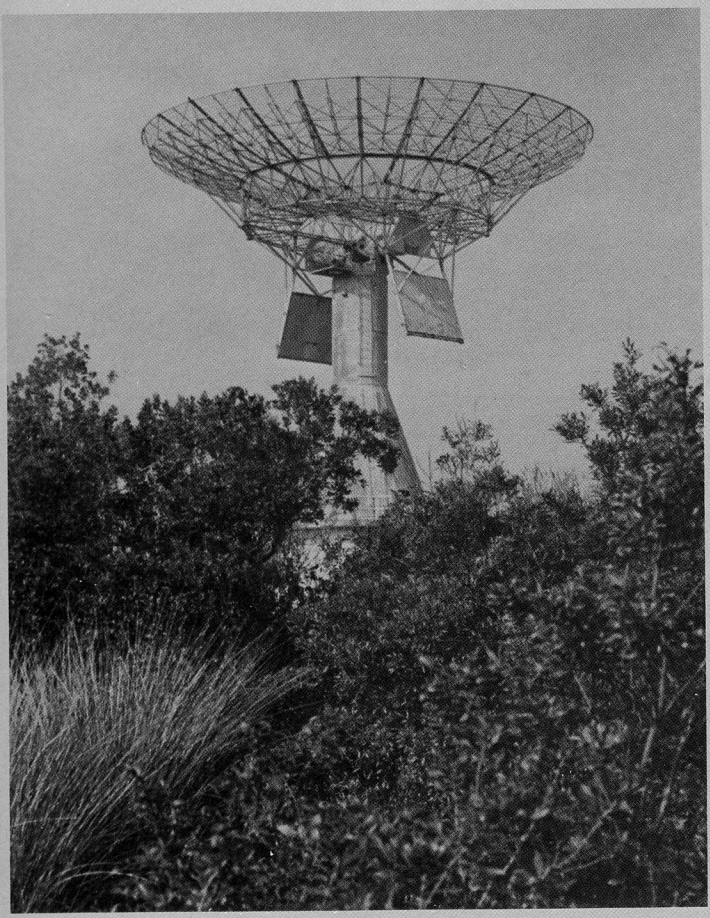
The U.S. Army Signal Corps

overlooked. Also, people like exhibits that are big. All of these principles are aimed at one thing: to cultivate in the visitor that most crucial and elusive key to education, awakening interest. When the soldiers of Fort Gordon visit the museum, they will leave better soldiers. They will have learned of the heritage into which they are being initiated. And ideally, they will gain new insights into how communication equipment works and be better prepared to learn their signal jobs.

But it will not only be the soldier who will benefit from the museum and science center. It could well become a major tourist attraction for the Augusta area and Georgia. Communications touches all of our lives and the Signal Corps Museum and Science Center will be for all of us.

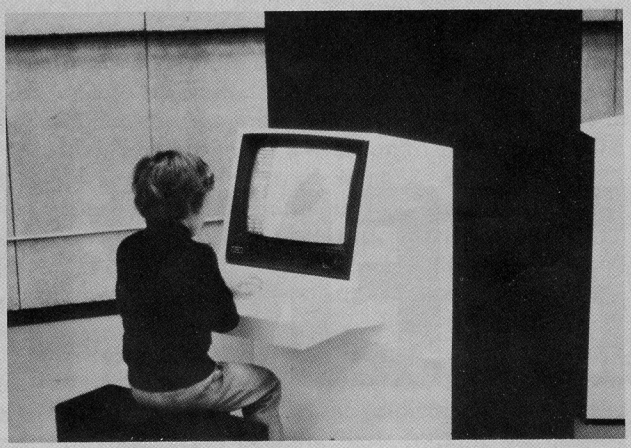
Two organizations have been formed to achieve these goals: The Signal Corps Association and the Foundation for the United States Army Signal Corps Museum and Science Center, Inc. Each is a separate and distinct entity.

The Signal Corps Association is a membership association non-appropriated fund instrumentality. Organized under Army regulations, this Association exists to unite individuals interested in preserving for posterity the proud history of the Signal Corps. The Association has various projects planned to help accomplish this goal. It plans, for example, to recognize the signal soldier of the year in various signal units around the world and to establish a Signal Corps Hall of Fame that would eventually have a place in the new museum. It plans to publish a Signal Corps Officer's Roster to help people keep track of their friends as they move from one place to another and to use THE ARMY COMMUNICATOR as a vehicle to reach out to people worldwide. The Association will operate the gift shop in the new museum which will provide Signal Corps memorabilia and possibly historical prints. Organizing a volunteer group to provide museum tours and to assist in research and conservation would be another important function.



This 90 ft automatic tracking antenna, which tracked the historic flights of Alan Shepard and John Glenn, was brought to Ft Gordon from Cape Canaveral. It will be erected with the museum and serve as a beacon to all communicators.

The number of visitors to science museums is greater than to any other single type of museum.



Demonstrations, interactive exhibits and audio-visuals will allow the visitors to see, to touch and to experience.

Museum and Science Center

The Association plans to reach out, not only to active duty signal soldiers, but to Reserve and National Guard soldiers, to retired soldiers, and to interested civilians. All are eligible for membership. As a professional organization for signal soldiers and a valuable tool in preserving the history of communications, the Signal Corps Association plays an important role.

The Foundation for the U.S. Army Signal Corps Museum and Science Center also plays an important role. It is from this organization that the leadership and guidance for planning the Museum and Science Center will come. The Foundation is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization that is incorporated in the State of Georgia. Its Board of Directors and Board of Advisors make up a powerful team that has the knowledge and experience to guide the planning of this new museum (see chart). Since appropriated funds cannot be used to construct this facility, the Foundation also has the very important job of conducting the fund raising campaign for design and construction costs. The funds would be turned over to the Army as a gift. But in a larger sense, the gift will be given to the nation. After it is built, the museum will be operated and maintained by the Army. It will be open to the public; no fees will be charged.

Through meaningful teamwork, between the military and private industry, that drum roll will surely be played and that ribbon will surely be cut. The nation should have and will have — a living tribute to the important role that communication plays. The Signal Corps Museum and Science Center will serve as that tribute and be pointed to with pride by communicators around the world.

Lt. Kellett, who is assigned to Museum Affairs at Ft. Gordon, holds a ROTC commission which he earned along with his B.A. in Communications at the University of Toledo. Before his present assignment, Kellett was a platoon leader with the 67th Signal Bn. at Ft. Gordon.