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## Profile of Betsy Tillman Kulick

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Betsy Tillman Kulick  
Mobile Satellite Users Association (MSUA) Newsletter  
editor and Corporate Secretary

Betsy has spent more than thirty years in the communications satellite industry, writing on either fixed or mobile satellite policy and industry issues. She has authored or co-authored numerous market reports, including one of the few reports focused exclusively on Inmarsat published in 1994. Since 1991, she has edited the Mobile Satellite Users Association newsletter, Link, and continues to support the Association. She is also a business analyst, working as a government contractor, supporting the Department of Homeland Security on a network used for critical infrastructure protection.

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1) How did you get started in the satellite business?

I have always been interested in the challenges posed by technology to social policy. In the early 1970s, the potential of satellite communications for improving conditions on earth was being actively explored by several far-seeing developing countries, namely Brazil and Indonesia. Having spent a year in Brazil as a high school student, and seen first-hand the enormous challenges Brazil faced in trying to promote economic development, I was immediately interested in how satellite communications could contribute to that end. I spent much of my time in college and then graduate school using each course I took to leverage a growing interest in satellite communications and development. Imagine my delight when in 1979, I was hired by (Andrea Maleter) to work in policy at the Communications Satellite Corp.(COMSAT), helping develop and implement US policy and interests in Intelsat.

2) How have you been involved in changes brought about in or by this business (innovations, technologies, services)?

I worked at COMSAT until 1985; the last day I was there I assisted in a small way to support the delivery of very heavy, large but "mobile" satellite terminals to Mexico City after it suffered a huge earthquake. That sparked an interest in mobile satellite communications that I've been in ever since. I've observed, analyzed, and written about, the evolution of mobile terminals from suitcase-sized electronics to the current handheld wonders. I wrote early studies on mobile satellite industry potential, co-authored market studies on the low earth orbiting proposals and have been fascinated by the industry ever since.

3) What do you think was the greatest event/situation/opportunity you experienced?

There have been many incredible events in the space industry over the past thirty years, but keeping to my own area of expertise, I have to say I continue to believe that Iridium's ground breaking approach to mobile satellites, in terms of the concept of the network, the way it manufactured low earth orbiting satellites and its approach to handsets, was one of the most amazing paradigm shifts I observed. While ultimately there were financial challenges with the approach (see below), Iridium, and Globalstar and the other little LEO companies galvanized the industry, leading to the creation of numerous smaller distributors and jobs; stimulating the development of a dynamic mobile satellite market than existed before their advent; and benefiting users by bringing more options, at more competitive prices, to the market for mobile satellite communications.

4) What was the greatest obstacle?

Staying with the above-referenced example, the greatest obstacle turned out to be market realities: terrestrial cellular built out much faster than the mobile satellite industry could develop, and that resulted in much publicized bankruptcies.

5) What do you see happening in the next five years in this industry?

My part of the "industry" is the commercial mobile satellite sector and I see consolidation among the companies, and miniaturization and increased power and capabilities for the terminals, giving users heretofore unlimited capabilities.

6) What advice do you have for women interested in entering the industry?

Follow your interests. It may not be easy, but it wouldn't be worthwhile if it didn't take some effort. My parents are still amazed that their daughter has managed to make an income following what appeared to them to be an odd interest in outer space. In fact, I am too!