

The
Indiana
Historical
Radio Society



BULLETIN

Vol 38

December 2009

4



Ive got your wave length-
So here we go:
A Merry **Christmas!** by RADIO.

The BULLETIN

A PUBLICATION OF THE INDIANA HISTORICAL RADIO SOCIETY
THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS OF DOCUMENTING EARLY RADIO



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The INDIANA HISTORICAL RADIO SOCIETY is a non-profit organization founded in 1971. Annual membership dues of \$15.00 includes the quarterly IHRS "BULLETIN." Radio-Ads are free to all members. Please include an S.A.S.E. when requesting information. Send applications for membership and renewals to Herman Gross, our treasurer as noted above.

The Indiana Historical Radio Society Bulletin – December 2009

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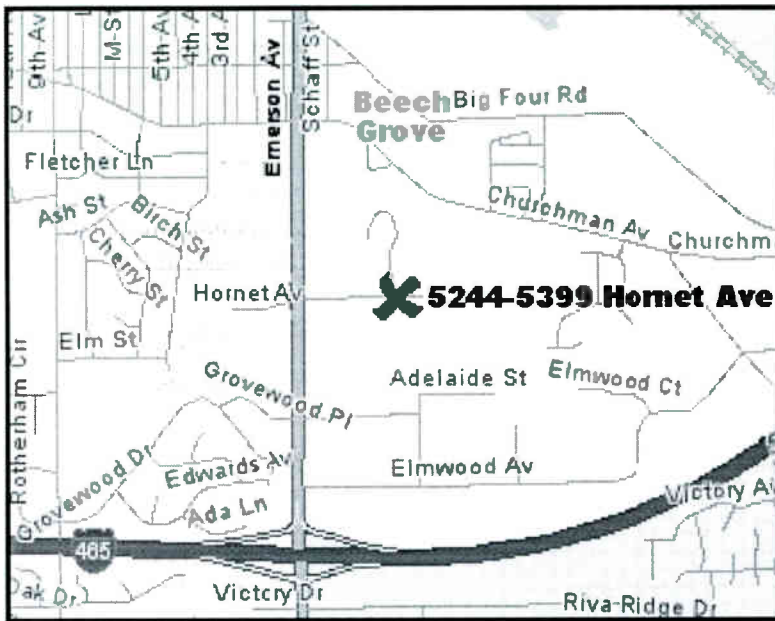
Our Christmas Greeting cover is adapted from a card out of the Ed Taylor collection. Andy Ooms, while on a job assignment in the Philippines, found time to record his recollections of listening to AM radio in the 1950's. Part one of his article talks of radio stations, personalities, and the social times while he was in college. (Remember Nard of South Dakota?)

Ed Dupart experiments (successfully) with paint remover on plastic radios. We are sure Ed has built up his supply radios for repair in anticipation of winter snow – readying new insights for us on radio restoration.

IHRS President Joe Farkas has been working with the Ligonier Visitor Center Bureau in an effort to keep the Ligonier Museum an interesting place to visit. On page 28 of this issue of the Bulletin the formal agreement between IHRS and the Ligonier Visitor Center is published. Note the agreement includes the remaining IHRS owned radios as well as the appropriate method of placing items on display in the Museum.

Fred Prohl, Bulletin Editor

**IHRS Winter Meeting – Hornet Park, Beech Grove
Saturday February 6, 2010**



Meet at the Hornet Park Community Center, 5245 Hornet Avenue, Beech Grove (South Indianapolis)

A Swap N Sell indoor meet - 8:00AM to 12 Noon (Setup 7:00AM.)

Old Equipment "Popular Vote" Contest categories:

- 1 Vintage Radio Paper (advertising, publications, premiums, etc.)
2. "Solid State" radios

Table space will be available for non-contest radio or radio related items you would like to display.

Registration fees: Free admission. Swap table rental - \$10.00 each for IHRS members; \$15.00 each for non-IHRS members. Tables are round, five foot diameter. Bring a cloth to protect the table.

The Hornet Park Community Center is three streets north of south-east I465, exit 52 (Emerson Avenue, Beech Grove). Travel north from I465 to Hornet Avenue. Turn right at Hornet Avenue – the Community Center is about two blocks east on the right.

Meet contacts: Fred Prohl, 812-988-1761, Ed Taylor, 317-638-1641

The Indiana Historical Radio Society Meeting Schedule

Winter 2010 – Hornet Park, Beech Grove – February 6
See facing page.

Spring 2010 – Kokomo Event Center – April 30 - May 1

Summer 2010 – Columbus – August

Fall 2010 - Riley Park, Greenfield – October 9

- - - Regional Events of Interest to Members - - - -

Antique Radio Club of Illinois www.antique-radios.org

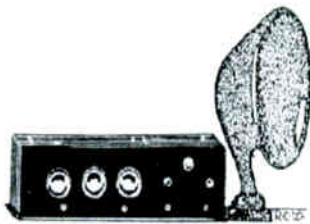
Next meet – February 7, 2010. American Legion Hall, Carol Stream , Il

Michigan Antique Radio Club www.michiganantiqueradio.org

Next Meet – Farmington Hills, Michigan January 30, 2010

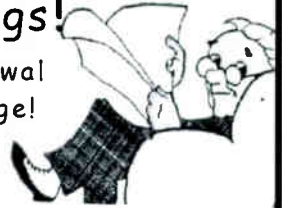
AWA-Antique Wireless Association www.antiquewireless.org

The original and largest historical radio group. The AWA publishes a quarterly AWA Journal. Membership is \$25 per year. Write to: Antique Wireless Association, Inc. Box 421, Bloomfield, NY 14469



Radio Greetings!

Save IHRS renewal
reminder postage!



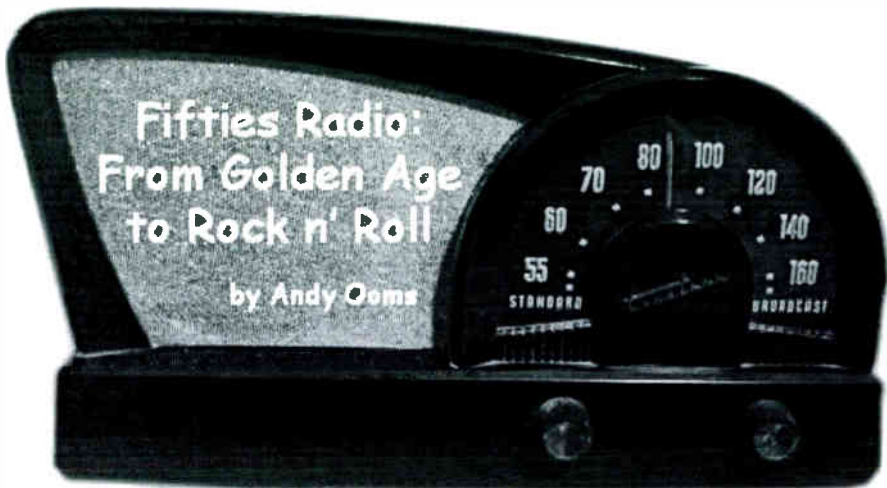
Renew your membership for 2010 now!

If the date on your mailing envelope for this issue of the Indiana Historical Radio Society Bulletin is 12/09 or earlier, it is time to renew your membership. Please send a check payable to the *Indiana Historical Radio Society* in the amount of \$15.00 per year.

Send your payment to:

Herman Gross, IHRS
1705 Gordon Drive
Kokomo, IN 46902.

Include your current mailing address, if not on your check, and your email address, if you have one. Membership questions? Contact Herman at hw144ihrs@comcast.net or call him at (765) 459-8308.



While doing consulting work in the Philippines during 2003, IHRS member Andy Ooms found time to record his recollections of radio listening – specifically the 1950's. The following is part one of "Fifties Radio: From Golden Age to Rock n' Roll"

Here we go again with another memoir type article by this radio hobbyist, or obsessionist if you prefer. My spellchecker tells me that obsessionist has not previously been a word, but it works for me, and if you are reading this magazine, you know what I mean by it.

This will definitely be a niche piece, covering that which appears to be a small niche: AM radio as heard in Grand Rapids, Michigan from 1956 until 1958 and 1960 until 1962. Those happen to be my years at Calvin College as interrupted by U. S. Army service.

Who could possibly be interested in this subject? Well, not too many normal people I guess, but persons intrigued by the science and magic of radio might enjoy it. Although Grand Rapids is the subject of my comments, the changes I noted there were being duplicated by similar changes in every city and region of the country. So this is as much a report about the revolution of the radio broadcasting industry in the 50s as it is about the programming in a particular region.

I have a lot of interest in many, but not all, of the various parts of the radio hobby. My particular interests include historic and current broadcast programming on any band, antique radios, Dxing on medium (AM band) wave, and short wave listening. Most of you readers probably have a greater knowledge in many of these areas than I do. I am an expert in none of these areas, but I enjoy what I do know about them. My enjoyment is as

much in thinking and reading about old radios, old radio programs, short wave and DX reports as it is in actually collecting tapes of old programs, or making lists of stations heard, or repairing antique electronic sets. My technical knowledge is shallow; my listening interest deep.

To describe what kind of listener I am, let me give you some examples. I enjoy long drives across the United States to visit relatives, to see tourist attractions, or to go camping and fishing. On these trips, I like listening to AM radio, picking up on the number of stations carrying national talk show hosts, listening to farm reports, discussions of local issues such as the history and utilization of the Missouri River, nostalgia music, classic country, and live sports broadcasts. When at home in Arizona or sitting around a campfire in the U.S. or Canada, I also enjoy listening to short wave, music in any language or anyone speaking English, with the exception of crackpots expounding their questionable economic, political, or religious theories. My short wave listening includes international broadcasters, hams, aviation and marine weather, military stations, aircraft communications, unidentified persons on boats, and clandestine voices repeating numerical or alphabetical spy codes.

This listening interest on my part has been around since 1943 when as a four year old I became interested in the music, voices, and laughter emanating from our family Zenith console in the town of Corsica, South Dakota.

Some of you have read my previous articles in the *Arizona Antique Radio Club News*, *DX News*, *Nostalgia Digest*, or the *Indiana Historical Radio Society Bulletin*. One was mostly about South Dakota radio listening in the 40s and 50s; the other was primarily about my high school radio business. Well, here's another one.

One more disclaimer before I take off on this third piece in the series: I am writing from what I think I remember. Some of you may remember some things differently. In most cases, if you remember something differently you are probably more accurate. I did not take notes over the years, and as a part-time retiree, I am not too interested in extensive researching.

I moved from South Dakota to Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1956. Naturally this was a major change in my life. I moved from a town of 450, where everyone literally knew everyone else, to a city of 200,000. Instead of working in the family business in South Dakota, I had the freedom and the necessity of getting employment from any source I could find because the family business no longer existed.

"Fifties Radio" - continued

And of most immediate importance, instead of taking it easy academically in a rural high school, I had to fight ferociously for passing grades in a college (with 5 times the population of my home town) whose majority of students came from more academically challenging high schools than mine.

As it turns out, longer term radical transitions in the radio programming field were well underway by 1956, and this article, being basically about AM programming, will be about those changes. Some changes in the nature of my listening were because of my geographical move; many were due to the huge shifts in the broadcasting industry. And some changes I noticed were because of my previously limited exposure to what had already been happening in larger cities and more eastern locations before those changes hit the upper Midwest hinterlands.

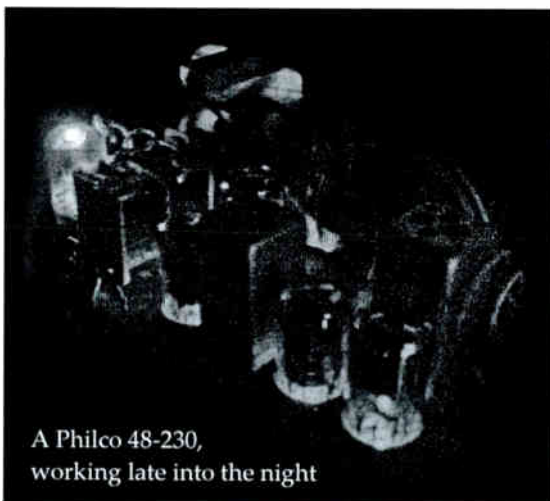
Two major changes in radio programming were occurring in 1956. One was the expanding penetration of television into America's leisure time; therefore the golden age of radio was rapidly coming to an end. The other major change was the reflection in radio broadcasting of the changes in the music industry; crooners, standards, music of Broadway and Hollywood, swing, big time bands, tin pan alley, jazz, all overlapping together to influence pop music, were being replaced by rock and roll. Subsequently rock and roll was replaced by its younger, tougher, harder sibling, rock; however that evolution during the 1960s and later was less specifically defined than the radio revolution from what is now known as music of your life or nostalgia music to the rock n' roll era, from tin pan alley to R&B influences.

A minor change in radio programming was to be a result of the upcoming growth in the number of sports teams and the westward movement of existing teams.

Transistorization (another new word according to my spellchecker) undoubtedly had an effect on radio programming as well, and has likely been the most significant technological change since tube receivers replaced crystal receivers. However, I don't have much to say about its specific impact on programming. Obviously the ability to produce smaller portables with good sound and low power usage led to more music being carried everywhere and to sports casts going wherever the fans went. On the other hand, it would seem that it would have helped the soap opera format as it became easier than ever for a devoted fan to carry the story around from place to place. Didn't happen; radio soap opera died absolutely when "Ma Perkins" wrapped on the day after Thanksgiving in 1960.

The listening experiences I refer to in this article were mostly on table sets with "all-American 5" tube combinations, or on whatever sets came with the cheap used cars I relied on in my college years - '48 Chevy, '51 Studebaker, '54 Chevy, '57 Ford. The introduction of transistors didn't affect me much until the 60s. Although I had a small radio business in my basement during high school, when I finally got serious about my education and went to college, I left all my old tubes and sets and parts in South Dakota, where they were subsequently thrown out or given away when my parents left the town of my childhood. During college, my radio involvement was almost only as a listener. I had a few spare parts, and rigged some switches and speakers so I could listen to baseball on the outside porch. Being on a tight budget, I bought a 78 rpm turntable for 50 cents or so and let one of the rotating parts near the motor run against a file for about a week full time so that I could reduce the speed in order to play long play records which I could borrow free from the library. The amplifier was a set of wires running to the pins of an amplifier tube in a table model Admiral. Only problem was that by the time the spindle was reduced to the point that the speed got down to about 33 rpm, the phono motor burned out. End of experiment (although I liked the science of it) and I decided that I was more interested in radio than in records.

My radio instinct though continued as demonstrated in my habit of taking whichever table model I used out of its cabinet, so I could see the tubes glowing and the variable condenser plates meshing. The terms "boatanchors" and "firebottles" for antique radios and vacuum tubes weren't in use yet, but I enjoy the terms. Listening in the dark by the glow of the tubes was one of the least expensive and most enjoyable pleasures that I had in those days. And sound quality of a properly-engineered AM station as heard on a good, medium-priced tube-model, table or console, with a good 6 inch or larger speaker could be surprisingly mellow.



"Fifties Radio" - continued

About ten years ago in California I occasionally heard the Kadidlehoppers, a West coast ham network named after a Red Skelton character. On Saturday afternoons, they had 30 minutes dedicated to buying and selling old radios and other old electronic equipment. The segment was introduced with dramatic and oratorical tones as "Radios That Glow in the Dark." So I know that I was not alone in enjoying the simple pleasure of seeing the tubes at work. In fact I still remember my excitement at about the age of 12 when I found out that radios worked outside their cabinets, which is not true of every invention.

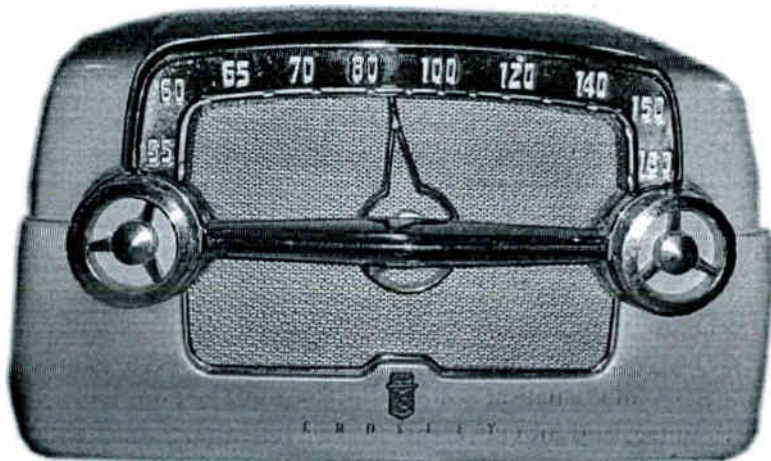
Advanced electronics achievements led to the growth of the audiophile field. Hi-fi became a frequently used phrase in the late 40s and audiophile magazines emerged. Long play records and the evolution of FM broadcasting, both beginning in the 40s, contributed to the growth of the hi-fi culture. Stereo records and equipment came along later. The opinions that solid state sounds are not as warm or as full or as mellow as sounds produced by hollow state (tube) equipment are intriguing, but I have no personal opinion on that. I like the possibility of that being true, but then my usual leaning toward the "newer is not always better" position has been known to get in the way of good science. I have an abstract curiosity about audio fidelity, but I am more personally interested in program content than in sound quality. To be otherwise would not to be a short wave listener or an AM listener and Dxr.

This piece about Grand Rapids will include data unique to Grand Rapids, but broadcasting changes were sweeping the entire country. Minor differences in programming have always existed from region to region (not many hourly oats, wheat, corn, and cattle market reports outside of the Midwest farm country or the Southwest ranch country), but the biggest music, news talk, sports talk, network versus local content, advertising, and format trends hit the nation at about the same time, starting from the coasts and in the cities, and moving across the country and into the heartland. The changes were caused by network and music industry strategy decisions, as affected by the huge influence of television, changing demographics, and the growth of teenager income and spending levels.

During my last two years in high school in South Dakota, changes were occurring in the radio world but I did not notice them then. I recognized them later in hindsight. At the time, my interests were broadening and my personal listening habits were changing, from after school adventure serials and evening detective shows and comedies toward more music, days and

evenings. If I thought about it at the time, I would have presumed that my interests were changing because of my age. I didn't particularly notice that the availability and variety of programming choices were also changing, and I had yet to realize that radio of the future would be drastically different from radio of the Golden Age of 1930 to 1950, and that radio programming as I had known it all my life was on the way out.

So what listening conditions did I leave? My listening had been done in a state with no television stations, only 15 radio stations, no FM stations. Only one of those SD stations had an evening signal covering my town. Many of the rest were daytime only or, at 250 watts on graveyard frequencies, too far to reach us at night without the clutter of many other signals. In fact the station in our capital city of Pierre was only 200 watts (the only 200 watter listed in a late 40s edition of Whites Radio Log of all American, Canadian, and Mexican stations), but too far away from us to have been heard at any power less than 10,000 watts. However our nighttime listening was enhanced by the huge unobstructed flat spaces of the prairies allowing us to listen to 50,000 watt stations from Chicago to Salt Lake City, from Minneapolis to Mexico.



A 1953 Crosley E-15 "Coloradio"

Day and night we had a strong CBS signal. ABC was strong, but days only, basically unavailable at night, overall with little prominence in our listening lives. NBC had a moderate signal during the day, was usually catchable at night although we might need to switch from Chicago to Dallas to Denver to Albuquerque to New Orleans to Salt Lake City mid-program due to signal fadeout. Our nearest station, 250 watts, 40 miles away but

"Fifties Radio" - continued

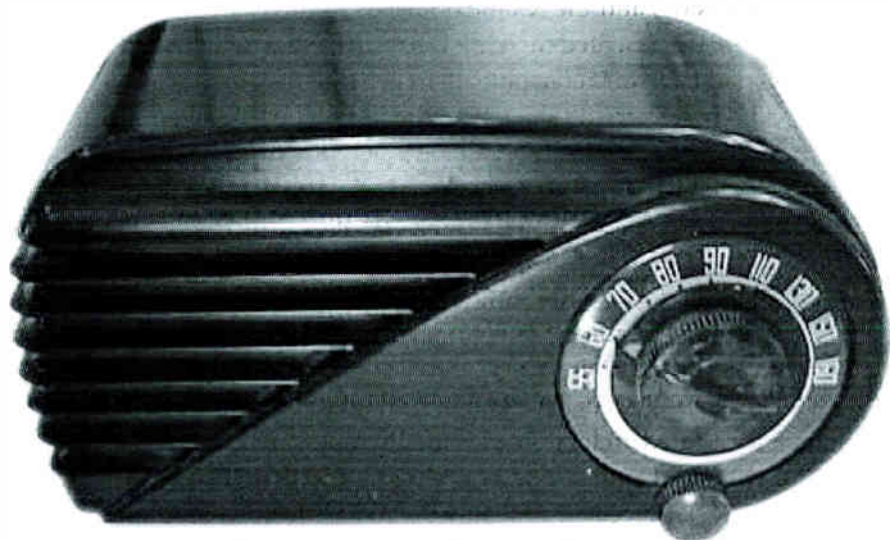
considered our local, had a strong signal all day with a lot of Mutual Broadcasting System programming and requested music, but it was impossible to receive after sunset.

A select synopsis of network programming in the early fifties: weekdays ABC had a variety of music and homemaker programs during the day, including the famous Don McNeil and "The Breakfast Club". CBS and NBC were mostly soap operas all day plus Arthur Godfrey 90 minutes every day on CBS. Mutual carried a lot of after school kid shows like "Wild Bill Hickok" and "Straight Arrow" plus various music shows, "Queen for a Day", "Bob and Ray", and the "Game of the Day" every afternoon during the baseball season. Nights: all networks had variety, music, drama, quiz shows, or comedians during prime time, which was an unknown phrase back then, and they carried live dance bands from a variety of hotels and nightclubs from around 10:30 until midnight. News or commentary was about three times a day for 15 or 30 minutes per session. Not much of the five minutes of news every hour concept existed yet. CBS had Edward R. Murrow, Eric Sevareid, Bob Trout, and Lowell Thomas for news. Mutual had Fulton Lewis, Jr. and Gabriel Heatter for news or commentary. Those are the ones I heard regularly; I didn't hear the ABC and NBC newscasts often. News or gossip, Walter Winchell and Drew Pearson were both on ABC Sundays. Paul Harvey had graduated from Chicago radio to ABC, where he still is, amazingly. (November 2003)

Sunday mornings tended toward religious programming all morning, drama or classical music in the afternoons. Saturday afternoon was the Metropolitan Opera on ABC. Weekend evenings on the networks were very similar to weekday evenings.

Local programming was a lot of grain and cattle prices and weather reports. The remainder was mostly records or public service shows like the "Singing Sergeants". Instead of tight formats, most stations had a variety of music. Country, pop, and polkas were often heard on the same station; many played a military march once a day at breakfast time. One South Dakota station, WNAX Yankton, had its own live band or two, playing daily on the radio and doing community dances off air. Their most famous group was the WNAX Bohemian Band. That station also carried Saturday night and Sunday afternoon versions of the "Missouri Valley Barn Dance". Lawrence Welk was a South Dakota lad who got his start on WNAX and the "Missouri Valley Barn Dance".

What did I move to in 1956? Grand Rapids (GR) radio listening was a whole new world compared to rural and small town South Dakota naturally. GR had 6AM stations and we could also hear at least 6 Chicago stations, 2 Milwaukee stations, and a Detroit station or two. I heard occasionally, but have little memory of, the small city Michigan stations broadcasting from Holland, Grand Haven, Muskegon, and Lansing. I do remember WJBL Holland having been told that the call letters came from the names Jerome, Bud, and Louie, sons of the station owner. GR may have had an FM station or two but I knew no one who listened to FM or even had an FM receiver until 1960.



A 1948 Farnsworth GT-50,51 "Bullet"

The 6 AM stations were, from left to right across your radio dial, WJEF, WOOD, WLAV, WGRD, WMAX, and WFUR. Some of us referred to them as Jeff, Wood, Laugh, Max, and Fur. We didn't have a nickname for WGRD; their call letters didn't lend themselves to a pronounceable abbreviation we thought, but decades later I realized that they were based on the "grand" in Grand Rapids, of course. What I will relate on the programming of these stations is based on what I remember of what I heard. My schedule was erratic as I usually worked, often up to 40 hours weekly, usually at more than one job, while attending college fulltime. Therefore I could be sleeping or working or studying at any time of the day or night. My classes were mostly scattered around weekday working hours, but I took some evening courses occasionally. But a radio was on when I was studying or driving

"Fifties Radio" - continued

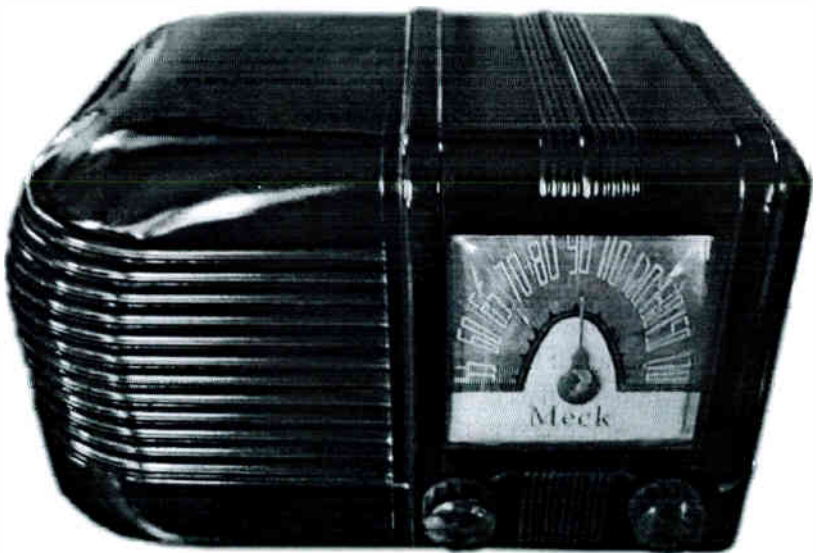
to work or in our 5 or 6 hour sessions in the drafting room of our Engineering Drawing course, station and volume controlled by pre-engineering student democratic rules. Depending on the job, I frequently was able to listen while working. During school vacation periods, I worked more hours, but also had more free time, which was spent fishing, on a beach, reading, or sleeping. But when I was awake my free time was accompanied by radio, and back then, never by television.

WJEF, relatively low power, at 1260, was CBS. Fetzer, a well-known name in Michigan communications and business circles, owned it. Fetzer also had a very good signal into Grand Rapids from WKZO 590 Kalamazoo. I remember WJEF mainly for carrying Detroit Tigers baseball. I believe that they also carried Detroit Lions football. In general, they broadcast Godfrey and soaps all day during the week, and the last of the CBS old time radio type shows at night—"Yours Truly Johnny Dollar", "Gunsmoke", "Gene Autry", "Our Miss Brooks", "Amos 'n Andy", "Life with Luigi", and every weekday night, the creative, entertaining, and almost forgotten by now, Robert Q. Lewis. The last of their network dramas, variety shows, and soaps expired in 1960, along with the similar offerings on the other networks. And on Saturday, WJEF played the Top 40 songs of the week for a time beginning in 1956.

WOOD, the call letters based on the Grand Rapids history and tradition of furniture production, was medium powered, 1300 on the dial, NBC, WOOD is still going strong as a news talk station. It had the biggest signal of the GR stations, and probably the most esteemed reputation. At 6 a.m. or earlier, it carried a fascinating daily 30 minutes or so of a man describing the early fur-trading, French, and Indian history of the area, interesting to listen to or return to sleep to. Days on WOOD, it was "Grand Central Station" or "Welcome Travelers", and otherwise almost wall to wall soaps until the late 50s. Nights were NBC shows until they expired, including in the early evening, "One Man's Family" until its final broadcast. During the dinner hour, it had a great polka broadcast (back then the Hit Parade had occasional polkas by Wayne King or Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians—remember Oh Ja, Das Ist Der Lichtensteiner Polka, Mein Schatz?). I remember the sponsor of the polka show as being announced as "Man oh Man oh Manishevitz." Remember sweet wines like Mogen David and Manishevitz before chardonnays and zinfandels were in style? WOOD carried Detroit Red Wings hockey, a team unknown to me until then in a league I had never heard of in South Dakota. WOOD also was the

home of Calvin College Knights basketball games. They carried Michigan Wolverines football. WOOD was the station people turned to for weather news and school closings; it was, and is, highly respected. And on weekends, WOOD broadcast a TOP 40 playlist for a short time in 1956 or 1957. In 1956, an example of innovative radio thinking popped up when NBC initiated "Monitor", (carried by WOOD), a well received program for at least 10 years. "Monitor" carried a variety of news and information pieces. Comedians with 5-minute segments participated: Fibber McGee and Molly at first, Mike Nichols and Elaine May in later years. Saturday nights had a live from Nashville segment of the "Grand Ol Opry". The beauty of the program was the ability of affiliates to move in and out of the "Monitor" programming all weekend.

Next, WLAV, 1340 kilohertz, ABC affiliate. WLAV programming consisted mainly of recordings. Tom Quain was a local favorite morning personality for a while. Martin Block played records out of New York on one ABC afternoon program, but network radio brought nothing to the disc jockey profession that couldn't be done locally as well. WLAV did have the "Breakfast Club" with Don McNeill and Aunt Fanny and the daily march around the breakfast table. This was live from a Chicago hotel for several decades, maybe 35 years, ending in the 70s, although I don't know how long it was on WLAV.



A late 1940's John Meck – model EE730?

Below is what you missed if you did not make it to the
IHRS 2009 Fall Foliage Meet in Greenfield.
This is the typical 'Parking Lot' fare at the popular
end of the season gathering.



Pictures taken by Michael Feldt and Ed Dupart – thanks!



IHRS Fall Meet Popular Vote Contest entries:
 Above, George Clemans, Ceramic Models of
 Vintage radio – 2nd place. Right, Michael Feldt
 Zenith 6V27 Battery radio – 1st place. Below, Bob
 Pote, Zenith TO. Below right, Ed Taylor,
 Hallicrafters Sky Buddy – 1st place.



At the IHRS Fall Meet, Stephen
 Sommerrock displayed these
 nicely restored radios:
 Left, a working "Radio In a
 Bottle. Above, a Bomberger table
 radio. Right, a Sparton 931AC.

A made in Holland "Siera".
 Ed Dupart's finished product.
 See "Latex Paint and Plastic Radios"
 – page 23 of this Bulletin.



"Fifties Radio" - continued

Although Mutual in the 30s and ABC in the 40s carried a small number of soap operas, most soaps, up to 20 a day on each network, were on NBC and CBS. These met tight specifications, being 15 minute broadcasts, usually none starting before 9 a.m. or ending after 5 p.m. with very little interruption by other types of programs sponsored almost always by a soap or other cleaning product, stories that never really ended, a daily production, 5X per week, with plots that evolved slowly and were described often so that a busy housewife could miss a day or two, but still catch up to the story line when she returned to the radio. They were invariably accompanied by emotive organ music.

Either I love to digress, or I hate to digress but cannot control myself. In either event, here is a soap opera digression. Without going to the web or a book, the following soap opera titles are in the clutter of my mind: "Ma Perkins", "Our Gal Sunday", "The Romance of Helen Trent", "The Second Mrs. Burton", "Portia Faces Life", "The Search for Happiness", "Young Widder Brown", "Lorenzo Jones and his wife Bel", the "Guiding Light", "Life Can be Beautiful", "Young Dr. Malone", the "Road of Life", "Mary Noble", "Backstage Wife" (or the Bob and Ray version, "Mary Backstage, Noble Wife"), "Stella Dallas", "Hilltop House", "Wendy Warren and the News" (the star read the news for the first third of the program, then segued into drama), "One Man's Family", and "Pepper Young's Family". I am not sure but "Days of Our Lives" and "The Secret Storm" and "As the World Turns", may also have been on radio before their TV debuts. If you remember these programs, you probably deserve some kind of prize. If you remember which were on CBS and which were on NBC, you probably should get a life.

In the last half of the 50s, WOOD and WJEF kept the network soapy offerings when they were still available. ABC and Mutual had not competed as soap networks for many years. But in 1957, ABC took a final shot at the genre and I heard it several times on WLAV. It was called something like "True Romances", and deviated from the standard soap by being 30 minutes in length and by having a complete story in each show. But the effort didn't last long. And yes, WLAV too had its own Top 40 playlist for a time, played nightly for a while without local competition in that time slot.

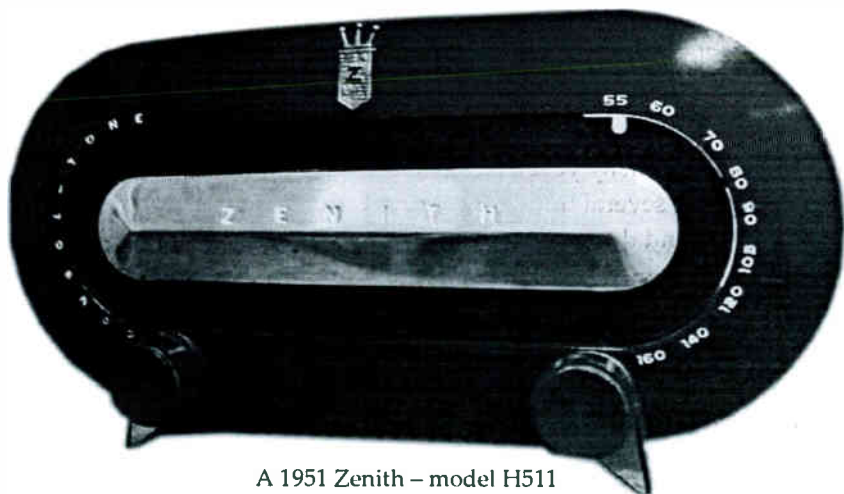
WLAV, WJEF, and WOOD were full-service community stations, broadcasting from 6 a.m. or earlier until midnight, carrying a variety of programs.

The other 3 Grand Rapids stations (WGRD, WMAX, and WFUR) broadcast daylight hours only, and were unaffiliated with any of the 4 major networks. Although their programming was more varied than many formats of today, they were not quite as full-service as the network affiliates who had more extensive local and world news.

Next on the dial was WGRD at 1410, the call letters still active in GR on FM. WGRD was a music station only, but had an eclectic variety. It had standards, crooners and instrumentals, in the morning daily; a great cowpoke type guy from 11 to 1 doing current western hits (seldom described as country then, but sometimes called hillbilly, Western, or cowboy music). Afternoons each day a Top 40 playlist was played in order, #40 through #1.

Drive time was not a concept or a meaningful time segment yet as mornings were not necessarily the most listened to time of day. In fact, the music seemed to get faster and more exuberant as the day wore on. But mornings did tend to some more well-known or well-publicized personalities. And as network offerings were being replaced by music programming, disc jockeys began the evolution to being personalities, and the personalities playing the music became more important. WGRD's star was the Happy Hollander, Big Bud Lindemann.

WGRD had a hugely popular Sunday afternoon show, targeting the large Polish population of the city, with waltzes, polkas, and schottisches hosted by Uncle Yashoo. Yashoo frequently hosted live broadcasts of popular Lake Michigan Sunday afternoon cruises complete with orchestras.



A 1951 Zenith – model H511

"Fifties Radio" - continued

In the fall of 1956, WGRD had a 15-minute soccer program each Saturday morning. It consisted of a man with a heavy Dutch brogue reporting the scores of several amateur adult teams. The teams, many comprised of recent Dutch or Polish arrivals, played in various public parks on weekends. At the time, soccer was basically non-existent in the upper Midwest except for some male college teams and recently arrived European amateurs. High school teams, youth leagues, pro teams were yet to arrive on the American scene.

WMAX was at 1480. It signed off at sunset, but signed on at 6a.m. year round, with an hour of hard core United Auto Workers rhetoric, condemning most actions of the auto companies, especially Fisher Body subsidiary of General Motors, the largest auto industry plant in Grand Rapids. Coming from farm country where except for a strike every 2 years by the Meatpackers against John Morrell at the Sioux Falls stockyards, we never heard anything about any unions and had only the vaguest concept as to what they were. Growing up in a farm community fostering a strong work ethic for reasons of economic survival and because of parental respect, I was amazed when first hearing such vehement language aimed at an organization providing better than average income to its employees who were doing the complaining and criticizing. Because of my lack of labor relations knowledge, I was totally intrigued by the UAW radio program, disagreeing with most of what I understood, understanding little, and wishing I had time to go back to sleep for a few hours. (I have always listened across the dial, so I seldom listened to any programs, including this one, every day. I listened to most available Stations many times each month. I did not restlessly tune from station to nation all the time like sometimes is done by the person holding the TV remote today. When I tuned to a station I usually stayed with it a few hours or most of a day or until the next sports broadcast on another station, but didn't necessarily go back to the same station the next day).

After its abrasive sign on show, WMAX had standards in the morning, and an 11 to 1 show hosted by Mr. Unknown. He was great, playing Jimmy Durante musical and comedy stuff for example, and other show business material of the 40s and early 50s and talked at length about the show business and music and jazz artists of that era, interspersing his comments with related records. I never had any idea who Mr. Unknown was, and don't remember anyone else ever mentioning having listened to him.

WMAX had perhaps the most popular Top 40 programming, also played in descending order every afternoon. The Top 40 was a major part of their format; I think they played it through mornings and again afternoons for a time, after the morning standards slot ended at 9. It also had a reputation of catering to the black 30% of Grand Rapids' population. WMAX did not have an urban contemporary or rhythm and blues format, but when playing outside the Top 40 lists, their music had a little more African-American flavor than any other station in GR. And they carried black gospel music and worship formats on Sunday. On Saturday afternoons however, Puny Patty Boyd played country music, and definitely called it hillbilly. One cold day, Purty Patty read the weather forecast and told us the temperatures were "going way down into the one numbers." This could be more grammatically described as the single digit range.

The last GR station on the dial was WFUR at 1570, still there and still with a religious format. At the time, full-time religious formats were very rare. Most stations had some religious programming, usually a lot on



A 1949 metal ARVIN 341T

Sunday mornings, plus from 5 minutes to an hour each morning right after sign-on, and maybe singing of the Lord's Prayer or some other hymn at sign-off. WMBI, operated by the Moody Bible Institute, in Chicago was a full-time religious station, but there were none in South Dakota and very

"Fifties Radio" - continued

few in other states, especially outside of the largest cities. But WFUR, also named after the furniture city concept, was a very professional sounding Christian station. It did not carry shouters or hucksters or beggars, but a lot of inspirational and academic theology, excellent choir music, a marching band music show daily, news, and quite a bit of secular or religious classical music. It had some Dutch language programming on some Sunday afternoons, in recognition of another major ethnic group in the city.

Andy – Quezon City, Philippines – November 10, 2003

In the second part of "Fifties Radio: From Golden Age to Rock n' Roll" Andy goes out of Grand Rapids with AM radio distance listening. He continues to give us his view of radio programming during the Fifties.

Prompted by the Fall 2009 Bulletin article "A Buick Super Somatic Radio (and WWII)" IHR member Dave Poland wrote the following:

I have seen that radio (actually 2 of them) at a friend of my parents 10 years ago or so. He had fully restored a 1941 Buick fast back 4 door sedan. (He) obtained the SW radio for it and borrowed another. He said it was an option (*short wave*) for the 1941 model only, so it was rare.

Both (*radios*) had the same problem with the dial. The dial is a plastic tube/cylinder with broadcast and several SW bands printed on it. Operated like a window shade - dial string worked against a spring and rotated the cylinder when the conventional band switch is turned. The original plastic barrel was deformed by time and, I suppose, heat in as much as the dial light was inside the cylinder. He managed to image much of the original dial. Then restored the rest of the image on the computer. Then he printed a new dial strip on clear plastic sheet. He had a section of nylon rod, which he had drilled out to make a hollow cylinder that fit the radio and allowed for the dial light to be inside the cylinder. He had not yet figured a way to mount his dial strip on the nylon rod.

Incidentally, Riders has the circuit diagram for this Delco - showing the SW bands.

Dave Poland

Latex Paint and Plastic Radios

By Edward Dupart

November 24, 2009



A lady at our church whose husband was a TV & radio serviceman for years had a radio collection. He passed away a few years back, so she sold off most of them, but I managed to buy the remnants. Among those radios was a Siera AM/SW plastic radio made in Holland. It was an attractive radio except that someone painted it with white latex paint and purple flowers. Stripping paint off of wood surfaces is not a problem using strong strippers. For the most part, strong paint strippers don't affect the wood, but on many thermoplastics, it will. Usually it will give the plastic surface a very rough look. I have seen plastic radios in the past that have been painted and you probably have too and would like to have restored the radio, but the problem is finding a stripper that won't eat the plastic. Finally, I did find a stripper that will remove latex paint from plastic without damaging the plastic. So, here's what I found out and how I stripped latex paint from my plastic radio.

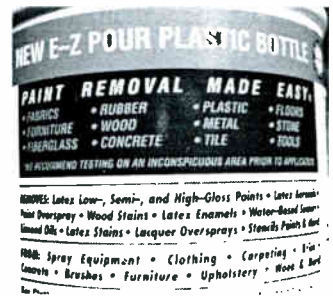
First, a little primer on plastics and their properties. Plastics are generally grouped into two categories: thermoset plastics and thermoplastics. Bakelite is a thermoset plastic and historically was the first completely synthetic plastic. Bakelite was invented by Leo Hendrick Baekeland, a Belgium who immigrated to this country in 1889. He applied for his patent in 1907 and introduced it to the world in 1909¹. Once made, Bakelite will not melt, it is brittle (radio collectors know that), it is heat and chemical resistant and not conducive to recycling. Thermoplastics on the other hand will melt after being made into whatever, which helps in recycling and depending on which thermoplastic may or may not be chemical resistant. Again, depending on which thermoplastic, they can be brittle or flexible or somewhere in-between. Plastic milk jugs are made of thermoplastics, polyethelene² to be exact and are quite flexible. PVC plumbing materials are a thermoplastic that are fairly rigid, but do have a little give to them. Some PVC's are also very chemical resistant. Polystyrene is a very popular thermoplastic used in many applications, plastic model cars and airplanes as one example³. This plastic can be very clear, smooth and shiny and can be colored. Anyone who has worked with plastic models also knows it is very brittle.

Latex Paint and Plastic Radios (continued)

But polystyrene and paint strippers don't mix. The result is a rough, sandpapery texture to the plastic surface and if it was a clear plastic, it will no longer be clear. There are many different kinds of thermoplastics, but most of the ones I have encountered in radio cabinets are not compatible with most strong paint strippers and some contact cleaners. Bakelite, a thermoset plastic, is an exception and seems impervious to most chemicals and I have stripped paint off of Bakelite surfaces with no harm done to the plastic. Bakelite can also be found on kitchenware mainly used as handles. Many radio and TV knobs were made from Bakelite as well as many electrical parts that required insulation and heat resistance properties. Plastics are an interesting study and I could say a lot more, but enough has been said here.

My Siera radio was made with the two different kinds of plastics. Bakelite for the major part of the cabinet, top, bottom, sides and part of the front and a somewhat flexible thermoplastic for the grille, which occupied a big section of the front of the radio. The Bakelite plastic I knew would not pose a problem with virtually any stripper that I would use, but the thermoplastic grill was another story. I researched the Internet for paint strippers for plastics and I found strippers that were for polystyrene plastic model cars, airplanes, etc., but was fairly expensive. Upon further research I found an inexpensive paint stripper, but I really didn't want to buy anything off the Internet. I keep my purchases to a minimum from the Internet. Surely one of the big box stores would have something and on my next trip to WalMart I found a stripper that said it was safe for any plastic. It is Motsenbocker's LIFTOFF 5 and sold for approximately \$6.00.

I bought it and when I got home I immediately tried it on the Bakelite top portion of the radio, after I took the radio apart and removed the grille from the main body of the cabinet. I sprayed it on, let it sit for a few minutes and took a plastic fiber brush to it and the paint came off! Wow! Fantastic! This stripper worked slow enough so that I could strip

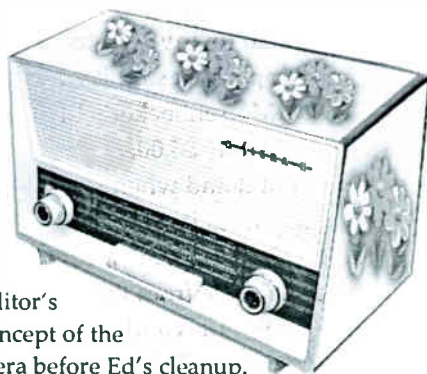


just the top latex layer off and leave the original paint intact that was underneath. I did this for the top and sides of the Bakelite portion of the radio. With a little cleanup, I got to see the original paint and then I saw why they painted it. The top and sides had a lot of scratches and cigarette stains, but the front of the radio looked good. I was also curious to see if this stripper would work on enamel paints, which I assumed was what they used on this radio from the factory. This stripper was made for latex paints, not enamels, etc. So now I sprayed on some more of this stripper on just the top and sides and let it sit a little longer, maybe 10-20 minutes. It worked, but this time I had to use some fine steel wool on the original paint to get it to come off along with a little elbow grease, but I had to be careful not to scratch the plastic. Do not use sandpaper or real coarse steel wool. Underneath was a very pretty light brown Bakelite surface. After some cleaning I polished it with white polishing compound and it looked great! Many European radios have a light colored finish on the front and the wood and/or dark finish for the top and sides. So, I decided to leave the top and sides the pretty light brown and the front with the original white finish.

The thermoplastic front grille took a little more time with its intricate grille work and to be safe, I tried the stripper on a small part of the grille that would normally be hidden from view. The paint came off with no damage to the plastic and it didn't attack the gold lettering on the brand name, Siera, and I was very pleased about that. I used a stiff toothbrush for the grillwork and with a lot of back and forth motion the paint did come out of the crevices. I was also generous with the stripper and I probably applied three coats. The paint had to be almost a liquid for the toothbrush to work effectively, but the grille came out looking like new!

They even painted the knobs! I put the knobs in a cup and sprayed them down and let them soak for awhile. I used the stiff fiber brush on the knobs and that brush cleaned out the crevices quite nicely, better than the toothbrush. Now the knobs look like new.

I put the radio all back together and what a difference! It's a pretty sharp looking radio. I wish I had taken a before picture, which I normally do, but I was so excited about trying out the new latex paint stripper, that I forgot all about

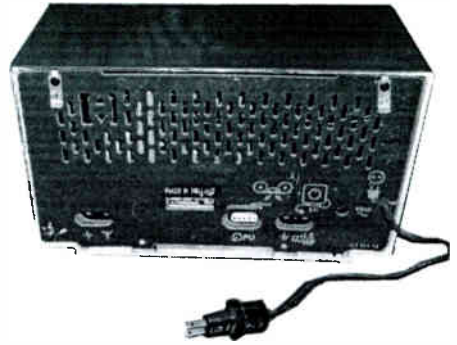


Editor's
concept of the
Siera before Ed's cleanup.

Latex Paint and Plastic Radios (continued)

doing it. Just imagine a white latex radio with purple flowers all over it and compare that vision to the picture of the restored radio.

This radio was made in Holland and probably for export, but barely. The only English I can find on it is the "Made in Holland" on the back of the radio, the "OFF" on the front and the abbreviations on the front, "SW" and "MW". The AC plug is an adapter to fit our AC receptacles and that plugs into the European plug and like most European radios, it has a voltage tap selector for various AC input voltages. It has the AM standard broadcast band and three short-wave bands. The first covers 3 to about 10 Mc, the second covers about 9.5 to about 12.5 and the third covers about 12.5 to about 25 Mc. There is no FM, which I found unusual for a radio of this vintage, which I believe, was from the late 1950's to the early 1960's. Electrically, I only had to change the filters and replace the missing 6BQ5. The tuning indicator has an open filament, but when working, looks like an exclamation mark and maybe I'll find one someday. It sounds good and is very sensitive. Other than that, I really know very little about this radio, so if someone out there has some information about it, I would be happy to hear from you.

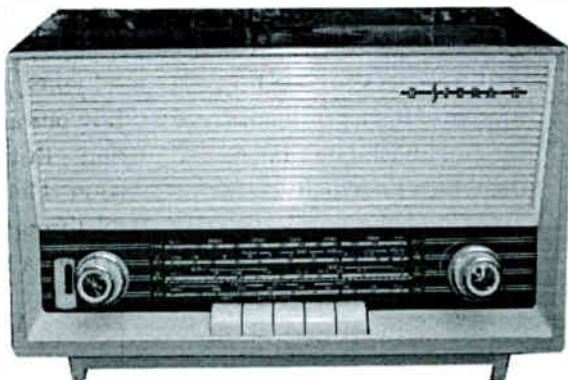


Now you know how to remove latex paint from plastics, so if you see an ugly latex painted radio with beauty down underneath, get it and try your hand at restoring it.

Ed

Footnotes:

1 <http://inventors.about.com>; 2 <http://americanchemistry.com>; 3 <http://en.wikipedia.org>



From all of us to all of you we bring a "good good good good good morning"



From all of us to all of you- greetings and salutations, best wishes of the season, health and prosperity though 1948. Just as the opening song on "Your Morning Matinee" welcomes you to an hour of fun each day, this calendar brings greetings from the gang to you, day by day. . . .

The "Morning Matinee" on WLW radio with Ruth Lyons greeted listeners through out the Ohio Valley in 1948. In 1949 Ruth Lyons and the 50-50 Club was televised, eventually bringing national attention. Ruth Lyons is credited with introducing "Talk Show" to radio and television Her name lives on in Cincinnati community, following her death in 1988, through the Ruth Lyons Children's Fund. The picture and caption text are from a 1948 WLW "Day By Day with your Morning Matinee" calendar.

Agreement between the Indiana Historical Radio Society and the Ligonier Visitor Center Bureau.

Earlier this year the Indiana Historical Radio Society (IHRS) and the Ligonier Visitor Center Bureau (LVCB) agreed to replace any and all prior agreements between IHRS and LVCB, and between the Indiana Historic Radio Museum and LVCB. Included in the agreement is the following:

- Establish 'ownership' of current contents and identify these contents.
- Establish means of adding and removing items to the present contents.
- Identify representatives of both IHRS and LVCB by name and telephone number.
- The LVCB will continue to operate a visitor center and display area referred to as the 'museum'.
- This museum will continue as a local display of items of interest, including Radios and related items.
- Items remaining from the Indiana Historic Radio Museum have been identified as belonging to IHRS. An inventory as of 12/30/2008 identifies these items. (A sample of the remaining inventory is listed below.) This inventory shall also be used to establish worth for insurance and tax purposes.
- These items shall remain as the property of the IHRS, and to remain 'on loan' to the LVCB unless otherwise removed per mutual agreement.
- If anyone claims they or immediate family 'loaned' an item to the museum, it may be returned only if documentation can be presented identifying the item. Documentation should include manufacturer, serial number, distinguishing characteristics AND a receipt signed by Fred or Marcella Schultz. This claim must be presented to both a current representative of the LVCB and an IHRS officer (president, vice-president, secretary or treasurer). Once verified, the item may be retrieved from the museum. The claimant will be responsible for picking up the item.
- Anyone wishing to 'make available' items to the museum shall first make the offer to the representative of the LVCB, who will then forward details to an IHRS officer. This will help establish 'worthiness' and 'value' of the item being offered. Only items that

have connection to the local community, are of unusual design, rarity, etc. and are in complete and safe condition, will be considered. The museum will not be a 'drop off center' for 'junk' or otherwise scrap items.

- If approved for display in the museum, the item shall be added to the inventory, noted as to permanent or temporary display, with length of time for display in temporary. Transportation of the item shall be worked out among the donator, LVCB, and IHRS. At the end of the display time, return shipment shall also be worked out among the donator, LVCB and IHRS.
- At anytime the LVCB wishes to have any or all of the Radio items removed and no longer displayed, the IHRS shall be responsible for disposition of the items. Return to original owners, outright sale, or auction shall be the IHRS option.

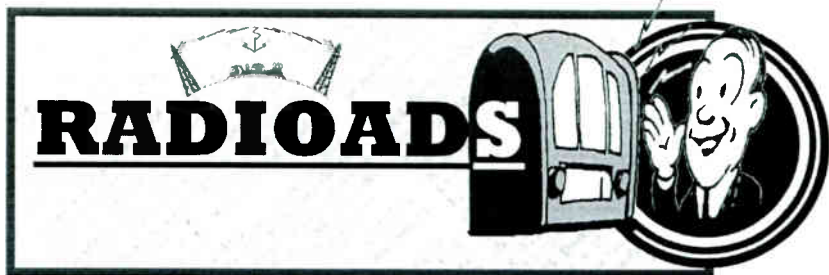
This agreement shall be reviewed and renewed yearly, starting from the initial starting date. The inventory listing and the representatives of the LVCB and IHRS shall be updated no less than yearly.

This agreement can be changed anytime by agreement between the IHRS and LVCB with a minimum of two representatives of each to sign and date with copies available to all parties.

The following is a partial listing of radios belonging to the Indiana Historical Radio Society that are available for display at the Ligonier Visitor Center Museum.

Philco model 70 Grandfather clock radio
A patriotic Zenith black dial console – red white and blue
Indiana Hyperdyne three dialer battery radio
Magnavox console
Philmore crystal set
Farnsworth model ET069
Scott Imperial All-Wave 23 tube console
SAAL horn speaker
Atwater Kent model 10 breadboard
An ELMCO battery radio

Joe Farkas, President of the Indiana Historical Radio Society
December 2009



For Sale: Standard Signal Generator model 605-B quite heavy and appears to be working \$125. Two boxes of N.O.S. automobile radio parts consisting of power trans., signal seeking radio parts, IF trans., volume and tone controls, etc. all for \$150. Also cabinet for a Zenith 10S464 free to any club member that can use it.
 Bob Pote, 1181 Crestwood Dr., Greenwood, IN email mrzenith41@aol.com 12/09

For Sale: Zenith Model "Royal 94" (R990) all transistor Inter-Oceanic FM/AM shortwave receiver (5 band). Complete with external AC adaptor, operating guide and service manual. \$50.00 Ray Andrejasich, Carmel, IN 317-846-6977 09/09

For Sale: 1947 Admiral 7T10-C, White, \$35.00; 1932 Aetna, Walnut, \$65.00; 1948 Aircastle 5050, \$35.00; 1947 Airline 05BR1525B, \$45.00; 1932 American, \$65.00; 1936 American Bosch 515, \$40.00; 1932 Avalon, \$65.00; 1933 Crosley 4C1, \$65.00; 1934 Crosley 5M3, \$115.00; 1953 Crosley E20GY, Gray, \$55.00; 1953 Crosley D-25-MN, Maroon, \$125.00; 1948 Farnsworth GT-051, White, \$125.00; 1935 Grunow 470, Walnut, \$100.00; Hot Dog Radio, \$22.00; Jackson multimeter, \$12.00; 1948 Magic Tone, Walnut, \$45.00; 1938 Packard Bell, \$65.00; Peerless Headphones, \$15.00; 1930 Pfansteihl, Walnut, \$225.00; 1930 Philco 20, Walnut, \$250.00; 1931 Philco 70, Mahogany or Walnut, \$350.00; 1931 Philco 90, Walnut, \$500.00; 1934 Philco 89, \$225.00; 1924 RCA103 Tapestry speaker, \$175.00; New bonnet \$15.00 each; 1934 Silvertone 7110, \$60.00; Unknown speaker, \$45.00; Unknown Cathedral, \$150.00; 1949 Truetone D905, \$45.00; 1949 Zenith 7H920, Brown, \$45.00. All radios are subject to prior sale and are restored unless otherwise noted. Bill Arnold, 1 Cindy Kay Dr, Washington, In. 47501 or call 812-254-1702 before 10:00 PM Eastern time or email bbarnold1@aol.com 12/09

For Sale: REPRODUCTION RADIO BATTERIES: I've developed replica battery solutions for most tube and transistor radios--batteries that have not been available for nearly thirty years. They look, they feel and they work--just like the originals! Plus, they are a reusable resource. Inside are holders for AA, C, D and 9-volt batteries. When the batteries wear out, simply remove them and install new ones. Contact Bill Morris at batterymaker@gmail.com or at 317-895-1334. 12/09

For Sale: Reproduction cabinet parts (wood). In stock parts; front panels, rear arch supports, base molding, for Philco models 20,21,70,90 (others per sample). Philco Colonial Clock top trim including finials, Grandfather Clock finials for Philco 570, GE H-91, Crosley 124 (others per sample). Almost any wood part available per sample, any make or model (per quote) (tooling charge may apply). Dick Oliver c/o Antique Radio Service, 1725 Juniper Place #310, Goshen, In. 46526. Ph. (574) 537-3747, e-mail- dolivears@aol.com 09/09

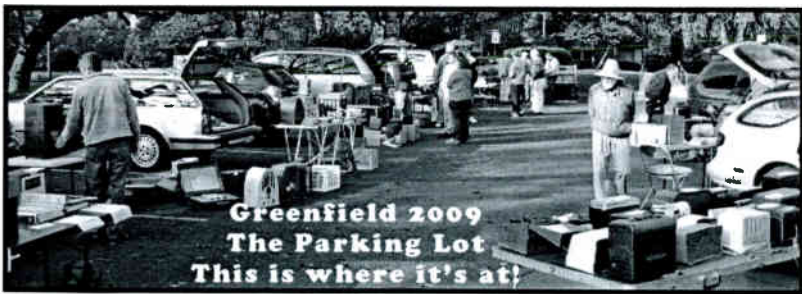
Interested in TV history? Want to see how it started? Try this Web site. www.televisionexperimenters.com You'll be amazed how far we've come. Pete Yanczer, 635 Bricken Place, Warson Woods, MO 63122-1613 09/09

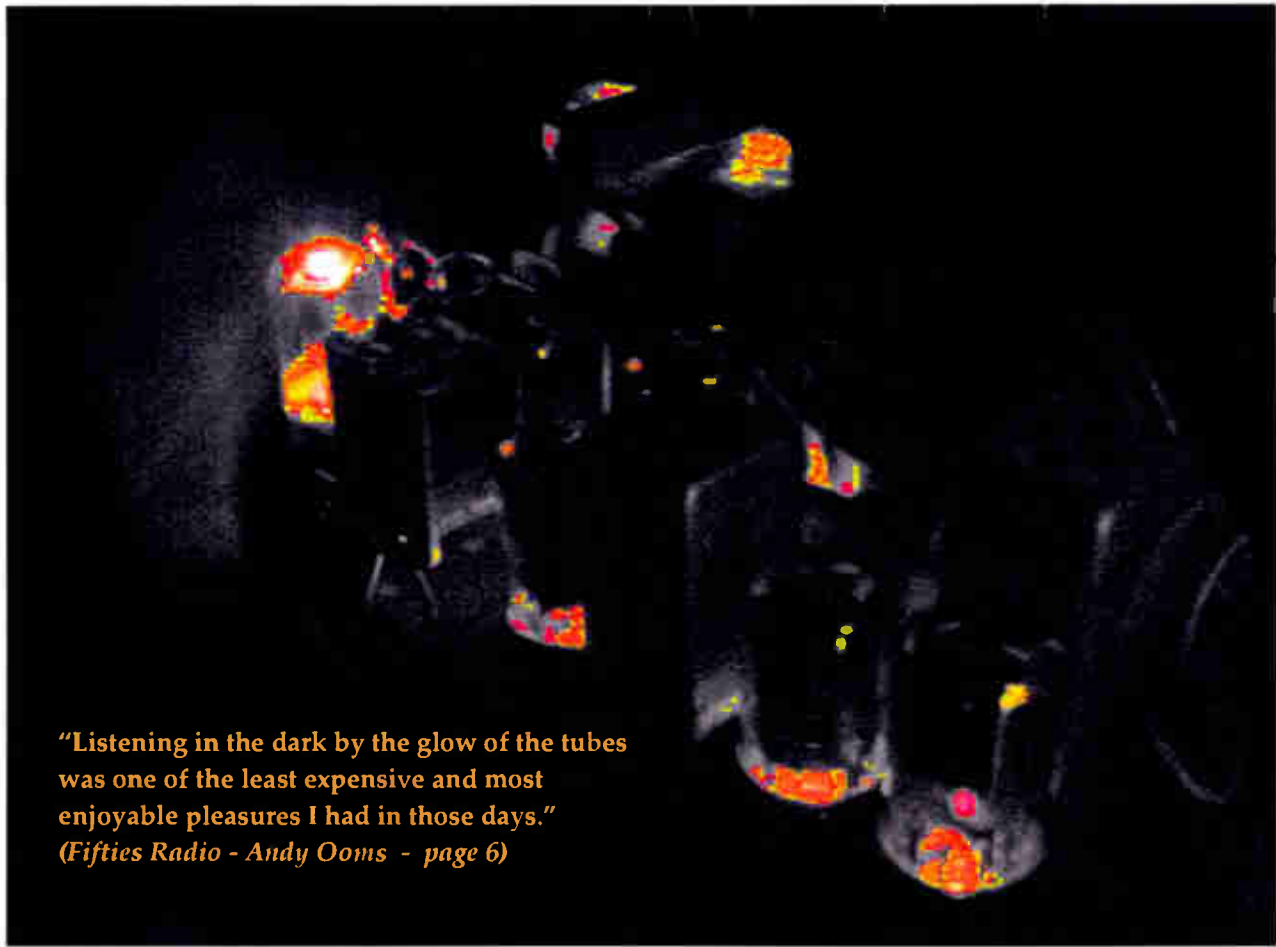


Write!

Radio ads - Free to IHRS members. Unless we are advised otherwise, we will run ads for two issues. The exception would be where services, etc. are being listed. Please send your ads to the editor at the address shown on page 2. If you cannot submit an electronic copy, we can scan in a typed copy.

Articles for publication. Radio history or restoration and repair of radio, your own radio collection; someone else's radio collection; your recent or memorable radio find; your experience at a radio event. Pictures are encouraged. We can scan good quality color or B&W prints. Sending jpeg pictures on CD-R works well. Fred Prohl





**"Listening in the dark by the glow of the tubes was one of the least expensive and most enjoyable pleasures I had in those days."
*(Fifties Radio - Andy Ooms - page 6)***