



OSCILLATOR

DELAWARE VALLEY HISTORIC RADIO CLUB

The Official Newsletter of the DVHRC

Editor: Ludwell Sibley

Vol. 4 No. 2, February 1996

THE MONTHLY PREZ

"I didn't really lose my job, it's just that every time I go there, there's this new guy doing it."

-- Comedian Bobcat Goldthwait.

In 1995, we incorporated, experienced a changing of the guard, watched the evolution of this publication from an ordinary local club newsletter to one of national significance, and saw a 39% growth in membership. All in all, I'd say it was a pretty good year. And if the 1996 Board of Directors meeting in January was any indication, the view of the next twelve months looks just as positive.

Professionally, I'm about to face some exciting new challenges as we perform a \$1.8 million renovation of our studios and offices in Roxborough. Working in the studio end of the broadcasting business, it goes without saying that a remodeling project of this magnitude is going to keep me busier than usual. It's for that reason that I felt leaving the DVHRC's presidential responsibilities to someone else would be in the best interest of the organization.

The Board has selected BILL OVERBECK as DVHRC President, TONY MOLETIERRE as Vice President, JOHN KERN as Treasurer, and I'll remain to perform the Job Nobody Else Wants (Secretary).

Thanks to one and all for a memorable year at the top, and please join me in wishing Bill and the other officers good luck in keeping all of us there! - Mike Koste, outgoing Prez

A suggestion: now that we're about to collect a \$1 contribution to offset meeting-hall costs, why not bring a widget or two to enter into the auction? "Pick it up" - it'll spice up the auction, cover the dollar, and probably leave you with money left over! - Bill Overbeck, incoming Prez

DVHRC DUES FOR 1996

This is your conscience speaking . . . If your address label says "95," now is the time to mail a check for \$10 to DVHRC at PO Box 41031, Philadelphia, PA 19127-0031.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Given the snow-out of our January meeting, the program for February will be the Borger-Newhard video on the Dearborn auction. You've read the press coverage of this signal event; here's a chance to get an eyes-on view!

The program for March will be "Name That Homebrew." Come help identify and troubleshoot Dave Abramson's recently acquired two-dialer. A novel chance to swap some oldie radio lore.

OLDIE PROGRAMMING

NEW CABLE SHOW OPENS

Reader Bob Thomas alerts us to the arrival of an oldie-radio series, "Remember WENN," on the American Movie Classics cable channel. A 10-part series on Saturdays (9-10 PM), it stars singer-actress Patti LuPone in a depiction of a hypothetical radio station in Pittsburgh in 1939, with music to match. The series was shot on film (!), treated to simulate early Technicolor movies. Viewer reports are welcome. . .

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Tuesday, Feb. 13 and March 12, 7:30 PM, at North Penn Amusements, 113 Main St. (PA Rte. 113), Souderton.

JOINING THE CLUB

Just send \$10 to DVHRC, Box 41031, Philadelphia, PA 19127-0031.

ADS & SUCH

Please send ads, articles, etc., to Ludwell Sibley, 44 E. Main St., Flemington, NJ 08822, (908) 782-4894.

For urgent items, we have a fax machine on this same number.

ON THE HORIZON

- Feb. 25** Greater Boston Area Radio Collectors "Radio XXVII," Westford, MA (see A. R. C.)
March 2 Absecon hamfest, Holy Spirit HS, Rte. 9 3/4 mil S. of Rte. 30, in/outdoors, buyers 9 AM (see QST)
March 16 NJARC indoor swapmeet, Hightstown, NJ (details next month)
March 22-23 AWA Spring Meet, Charlotte NC (see A. R. C. or OTB)
March 30 PARS Spring Fever, Washington PA (see ARC)
March 30-31 Greater Baltimore Hamboree, Timonium (MD) Fairgrounds, 8 AM
June 7-8 MAARC RADIOACTIVITY, Timonium, MD (tentative - watch this space!)

INDUSTRY NEWS

NEW (OLD) DOCUMENTATION SERVICE ON BRITISH GEAR

For the last couple of years, copies of tech manuals and related operation-and-maintenance information on vintage gear has been available from Savoy Hill Publications. It appears that the original owner of this firm has repurchased and reorganized it. The new address is: Tudor Gwilliam-Rees, 50 Meddon St., Bideford, Devon, EX39 2EQ, England. Phone is 01237-424280 (eves. 7-9 PM GMT) or an answering set at other times.

The available material is quite sweeping in subject coverage: classic British (and some other) tube audio, military equipment, foreign tube data, radio-receiver servicing information, etc.

INDUSTRY NEWS

SHALLCROSS STILL AROUND

Bob Thomas' narrative on working for Shallcross in Philadelphia (*Oscillator*, Nov.) didn't go into detail as to the fate of the company after it moved South. For some years there's been a Shallco in Smithfield, NC - a town perhaps better known as the site of an important repeater station on AT&T's Boston-Miami coaxial cable of the '60s. Well, now the original name is back, as IRC Shallcross, "a TT Group company," in the same town. This suggests a merger with the International Resistance Corporation, another "famous name" in Philadelphia electronic history.

And what's Shallcross making? Well, their full-page ad in the current issue of *Glass Audio* promotes their precision wire-wound resistors. Jumping on the metaphysical-mysticism bandwagon typical of tube-audio advertising, Shallcross claims that "audio engineers" feel that resistors of their style produce "the richest sound" compared to metal-foil resistors with their "sterile" sound. So much for stodgy old-time ad-writing . . .

INDUSTRY NEWS

NEW TANNENBAUM CATALOG AVAILABLE

DVHRC members Mike and Alice Tannenbaum proudly report availability of their new catalog. Expanded to 88 pages (!), it offers an expanded variety of repro tech manuals on all manner of equipment - comm gear, hi-fi, test gear, etc. There is also a wide selection of restoration parts. Copies are available from A. G. Tannenbaum, PO Box 386, Ambler, PA 19002.

READERS' COMMENTS

Alton DuBois

The article about "Tommy and the Midgets" [January *Oscillator*] reminds me of my friend who had a large chicken farm on Long Island. He had hundreds of chickens on the floor of a large barn. In the center of the room, he had an old radio, tuned to WQXR, that played symphonic music all day. I asked him "Why?". His answer was that as long as there was continuous sound or music, the chickens were quiet. If the room was silent and a sudden noise occurred, the chickens would kill each other running against the wall. So music soothes the beasts of all kinds, Little Nipper included.

"THERE'LL ALWAYS BE AN ENGLAND"

The Dec. 1995 *Bulletin* of the British Vintage Wireless Society has a story by collector Dennis Yates: what does one do upon finding a rare and precious Marconi magnetic detector (1912 vintage), less the two horseshoe magnets? Well, to summarize: after a false start with a maker of modern refrigerator magnets, the author semi-accidentally discovered the original maker of Marconi's magnets, still in business in Sheffield. They hadn't made any of these custom parts since 1932, but still had the factory specs and a bit of the special high-cobalt steel that was used. One of their old-time workmen was still available (at age 80) to hand-forge and machine the magnets. The result: Yates got his magnets, utterly true to the originals, and at a price of about \$7 each. Would that we could do so well on repro parts!

DATING PHILCO, SYLVANIA, AND (SOME) ZENITH TUBES

Alan Douglas

In the June 1993 *Antique Radio Classified*, Ron Ramirez presented information on dating early-1930s Philco tubes, supplemented by Tom Margaretic's letter in October on the later date codes. These dates are useful for determining if your Philco still has any of its original tubes or, for the fanatic, for repopulating it with the right ones. Since Sylvania made most Philco tubes, and the codes were identical until 1935, Sylvania tubes can be dated by the same method.

The code consists of a letter and a digit, corresponding to the month and to the last digit of the year. From 1930 to 1935, the code for Philco and Sylvania was as follows:

C	January	J	May	K	September
H	February	N	June	B	October
M	March	A	July	F	November
D	April	E	August	L	December

In Sept. 1935 the two codes diverged. Sylvania changed to a different set of letters, which lasted through 1938:

A	January	E	May	I	September
B	February	F	June	J	October
C	March	G	July	K	November
D	April	H	August	L	December

Philco opted for only four letters, one for each quarter of the year, and to make it easier for the dealer to remember (because it was the basis for warranty replacements) used the four letters O-P-U-S. None of these, it will be noted, overlapped with the previous code. This system was in force through 1949. In 1950 it changed to an open date code of four digits, the year followed by the week (for instance, "5052" was the last week of 1950).

Sylvania meanwhile in 1939 changed to a code similar to the O-P-U-S arrangement, but with different letters (V, T, perhaps H, Z, and maybe others). In 1947 Sylvania went to an open date code with only one digit for the year ("913" was the 13th week of 1949). One quirk of both the Philco and the Sylvania open codes was that the "week" digits were changed only every month, or even every quarter, as "13," "26," "39," and "52" are more popular than others.

Up to mid-1938, the maker's logo and date code were hot-stamped into the base. After May or June, these were silk-screened on, in yellow ink (Philco) or green (Sylvania). If another date code is etched or stamped on the glass, under the type number, it often means that another manufacturer made the tube (swapping was not uncommon among some makers, and became more prevalent as time went on).

Some Zenith tubes of the late '30s and '40s were made by Sylvania, with the same date codes.

An "R" following the code indicated "replacement" -- not sold installed in a radio. "MR" is "Maintenance and Repair," tubes made from the last half of 1943 through 1945, for civilian use under wartime shortages.

MORE DATE CODES FOR TUBES

Ludwell Sibley

To follow up on Alan Douglas' tube date codes: information is available in the Dec. 1940 issue of *Radio-Craft* on then-current codes for Ken-Rad, Sylvania, and Raytheon products.

Ken-Rad had a dating policy that depended in part on type (battery vs. regular), but without explicitly stating how long the guarantee ran. The replacement scheme ran as follows. Defective tubes were to be replaced if returned before or during the month shown below (assuming no evidence of abuse, etc.):

<u>Code</u>	<u>Month</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Month</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Month</u>
H9	7-40	N0	1-41	V0	7-41
I9	8-40	P0	2-41	W0	8-41
J9	9-40	R0	3-41	X0	9-41
K9	10-40	S0	4-41	Y0	10-41
L9	11-40	T0	5-41	Z0	11-41
M0	12-40	U0	6-41	A1	12-41

For battery tubes, the guarantee period ended three months *sooner than* the month shown. Such types were in the 1.5-volt and 2.0-volt series: 1A5, 1A7, 1B7, 1C5, 1D8, 1G4, 1G6, 1H5, 1LA4, 1LA6, 1LB4, 1LH4, 1LN5, 1N5, 1N6, 1P5, 1Q5, 1T5, 3A8, and 3Q5.

Ken-Rad tubes coded A7 to L7, M8 to Z8, and A9 to G9 were out-of-guarantee at the time.

Sylvania's quarter-oriented scheme was as stated in Alan's article. From examining the published dates, the plan gave actual guarantee intervals ranging from 11 to 14 months. Known codes were:

<u>Code</u>	<u>Interval</u>	<u>Ends</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Interval</u>	<u>Ends</u>
Z9	5-1-39 to 8-1-39	7-1-40	Z0	5-1-40 to 8-1-40	7-1-41
V9	8-1-39 to 11-1-39	10-1-40	V0	8-1-40 to 11-1-40	10-1-41
T0	11-1-39 to 2-1-40	1-1-41	T1	11-1-40 to 2-1-41	1-1-41
N0	2-1-40 to 5-1-40	4-1-41	N1	2-1-41 to 5-1-41	4-1-42

Raytheon's quarter-oriented guarantee was nominally a year, but actually ran up to 15 months. It expired exactly one year after the listed shipped-before date. Its system was:

<u>Code</u>	<u>Shipped Before</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Shipped Before</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Shipped Before</u>
C9	3-31-39	L9	12-31-39	I0	9-30-40
F9	6-30-39	C0	3-31-40	L0	12-31-40
I9	9-30-39	F0	6-30-40	C1	3-31-41

The Stewart-Warner Company, receiver maker, reported that tubes used in its sets (and some others') were guaranteed for 12 months after the code date. In contrast to the tube manufacturers, it pointed out that the code date was jiggered to allow for time in dealer stock: "Tubes sold to set manufacturers usually are coded ahead so that the warranty period actually begins several months after the date of manufacture, thus normally allowing sufficient time for the set to go from factory to distributor to dealer to customer. For example, a tube shipped to us in July might be coded August or September, and the warranty would then extend 12 months after the code marking."

What's this all mean? Well, (A) You can date a tube, knowing the code, but don't try to be too precise about it; (B) we can feel sorry for the poor repairman who had to keep track of makers' inconsistent codes and guarantee policies; (C) the open dating system eventually advocated by the Radio Manufacturers' Association represented a considerable reform of a confusing situation.

For more date codes on oldie tubes: the RCA code of the '40s is listed in a handout from a talk at AWA's annual conference by Bro. Patrick Dowd, W2GK. It is orderable from Antique Electronic Supply. The coding system for Western Electric tubes is covered in an article by Attila Balaton in *AWA Review*, Vol. 5.

WANT ADS

Free exposure for your desired or excess stuff! Unless requested otherwise, we'll run each ad for two months, and will send ads to NJARC's *Jersey Broadcaster* for double coverage.

WANTED: Power supply for Hammarlund "Super-Pro" military receiver BC-779-B, BC-794-B, or BC-1104-C. Power supply units identified as RA-74-C, RA-84-B, or RA-94-A. Ted Sowirka, 517 Baeder Rd., Jenkintown, PA 19046, (215) 886-0982. (2-3/96)

FOR SALE: 1958 Grundig model M1 SO US "Musical Instrument." AM-FM-SW lowboy console. Varied light wood cabinet has stereo phono with separate amp. for second channel. Works well, looks good. First \$20 takes it. Marty Friedman, (908) 238-1047 (eves.) (2-3/96)

WANTED: Phonograph-related items - top dollar paid immediately for Vogue Picture Records, wax-cylinder records, needle tins, Nipper, record cleaners, puzzles, advertising mirrors, pins, phonograph toys, posters, original advertising from Edison and Victor. Thanks! Bernie Seinberg, 714 Moredon Rd., Meadowbrook, PA 19046-1907, (215-886-6124. (1-2/96)

FOR SALE: Entire lot of 6,000 tubes, N. I. O. B. All must go! Call or write for list. J. J. Papovich, 53 Magnolia Ave., Pitman, NJ 08071, (609) 582-8279. (2-3/96)

684 Forman Road
Building 'B'
Souderton, PA 18964

(215) 721-3990



Deborah S. Froshour
Proprietor

BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

Antique Radios & Phonographs
Buy - Sell - Repair

Frank A. Johnson
FAIRLESS HILLS, PA
(215) 943-8295

WANTED: Circuit diagram and purpose for a Knight FM monitor receiver, model KG-220, 30-50 MHz, by Allied Radio, Chicago. [Nuts! - it's not in Sams. - Ed.] **MANUAL AVAILABLE:** I have an Electronic Measurements Corp. emission-type tube tester, model 205. It has a roll chart, the operating instructions are in a four-page typewritten document that includes settings for ballast tubes and also some additional settings for newer tubes, that was published in April 1957 *Radio & TV News*. Anyone needing copies, please sent \$1.00 for copy and postage. Alton DuBois, Jr., 67 Peggy Ann Rd., Queensbury, NY 12804, (518) 792-3130. (1-2/96)

FOR SALE: The DVHRC tube program offers clean, tested, boxed tubes at very reasonable prices with availability at any club meeting. Proceeds go to the club. About 295 types are currently in stock. Of course, donations of radio-type tubes in any condition are welcome. See Charlie Class at any monthly meeting to obtain or donate tubes.

WANTED: Collins R-390 parts set or parts, dust covers, rack cabinet. Pick up within 100 miles of central NJ. Tom Provost, 19 Ivanhoe Dr., Robbinsville, NJ 08691, (609) 259-7634. (1-2/96)

WANTED: AK 275 receiver in good condition. Bob Messerschmidt, 764 Backhus Estate Rd., Glen Gardner, NJ 08826-2205, (908) 832-6976, 8-11 PM. (1-2/96)

WANTED: DVHRC members for volunteer activities in 1996. We can use your help in our efforts to encourage growth in the club, donations to the reference library, and tech talks. Of course, contributions to the *Oscillator* are always welcome too. If you can spare a couple of hours a month on behalf of the club, please step forward!

AVAILABLE: From the "Tube Lore" talk at the Nov. meeting, the three-page "Tube User's Guide" handout. Send a 32¢ SASE to your friendly editor. (1-2/96)

WANTED: Desperately seeking a clean pressing of the Fats Waller 78-RPM record "Louisiana Fairytale" on RCA Victor. Will pay a fair price or consider trade for 1920s vintage "race" or spoken-word records. Mike Koste, (215) 646-6488. (2-96)

FOOD & DRINK: a good place to join fellow collectors for dinner before meetings is the Hillside Tavern, half a block uphill from the meeting site.



1921, Feb. 2 KDKA airs the first remote broadcast of a church service.

1922, Feb. 19 WJZ airs Ed Wynn in "The Perfect Fool," the first broadcast of a Broadway musical.

1923, Feb. 20 Chicago Radio Labs' Karl Hassell files the famous "lightning bolt" as the official trademark of the new Zenith Radio Corporation with the US Patent Office.

1932, Feb. 15 Despite the Depression, combined ad revenues on NBC and CBS exceeded \$35.7 million the previous year.

1933, Feb. 1 Food, drugs, toiletries and tobacco were the products most advertised on radio in 1932.

1937, Feb. 15 Charging the networks with monopolizing the airwaves, legislators call for a congressional investigation of radio. (This political situation eventually [1941] leads to the split of NBC Red and Blue networks into NBC and ABC.)

1942, Feb. 2 FCC shuts off construction of all new radio stations in areas already receiving primary service. Wartime shortages of equipment, transmitting tubes, building materials, and personnel block most other station construction until situation improves in late 1944.

1946, Feb. Sylvania Electric Products announces commercial availability of the 1N34, the first mass-market germanium crystal diode. This obsoletes the galena detector with its fussy "cat's whisker" contact, and opens the era of the "germanium radio." See *Radio Age* this month (Feb. 1996 issue) for full details. [LAS]

1946, Feb. 4 General Mills allocates \$5 million, about half its advertising budget, to radio.

1947, Feb. 10 Mutual Broadcasting System signs its 400th affiliate.

1948, Feb. 2 RCA announces development of a 16-inch round metal-body kinescope (16AP4), the first 125-square inch-picture tube.

1953, Feb. 23 Westinghouse buys WPTZ-TV (now KYW-TV) from Philco for a record \$8.5 million.

1954, Feb. 8 Major Edwin Armstrong commits suicide.

1955, Feb. 28 Bing Crosby Enterprises demonstrates a color videotape recording system.

1957, Feb. 11 Not including automobile receivers, Americans bought 8,332,077 radios in 1956.

1957, Feb. 18 Oklahoma judges say they favor TV cameras in courtrooms.

A TEASER

NAMES IN RADIO

Quietly boosted from the *Call Letter* of the Northwest Vintage Radio Society, Dec. 1995.

Who were these folks from old-time radio days? Make your best guess and then check the answers.

1. John Sullivan
2. Eunice Quedens
3. Milton Berlinger
4. Nathan Birnbaum
5. Owen Patrick Eugene Dennis McNulty
6. Doris von Kappelhoff
7. Frances Butts
8. Charles Aldrich
9. Lindley Armstrong Jones
10. Joseph Levitch
11. Thomas Garrison Morfit
12. Peggy Lou Snyder
13. Leonard Rosenberg
14. Leonard Slye
15. Hariette Lake
16. Isaiah Edwin Leopold

"Stage names" for these old-time radio performers:	
16.	Ed Wynn
15.	Ann Southern
14.	Roy Rogers
13.	Tony Randall
12.	Harriet Nelson
11.	Gary Moore
10.	Jerry Lewis
9.	Spike Jones
8.	Gale Gordon
7.	Dale Evans
6.	Doris Day
5.	Dennis Day
4.	George Burns
3.	Milton Berle
2.	Eve Arden
1.	Fred Allen

THAT RESISTOR MNEMONIC AGAIN

Anyone who once learned basic electronics had to learn the color code for resistors and such. Rather than memorizing the code directly ("black is zero . . . brown is one . . . red is two . . ." up through "white is nine"), the usual practice was to get familiar with a mnemonic device to reconstruct the code. Since the code ran B-B-R-O-Y-G-B-V-G-W, the favorite (printable) memory jogger was "Better Be Right Or Your Great Big Venture Goes Wrong." Budding military technicians learned something ribald about "Bad Boys (getting nasty with) Our Young Girls . . ." There was reportedly another, which I've never heard, about Vile Grackles.

The *IEEE Spectrum* of July 1985 had a bunch more to offer. How about the following:

- "Back Before the Revolution Our Young Gallant Boys Voted for George Washington."
- "Buxom Beauties Roar Out, "Your Guilty Brethren Vilify Great Women!" (countering "Bad Boys").
- "Burly Beasts Romp Over Youthful Geckos Between Vicious German Whitefish."
- "Big Banks Rely On Your Greed But Visa Grabs Without Gold or Silver" (gold and silver being the extra colors for special multiplier values).
- "Beans Before Riding On Yachts Give Boaters Very Ghastly (or Good) Wind."

Anything goes, as long as you can figure out what yellow-purple-orange stands for!

JUST FOR REFERENCE

The *Oscillator* frequently refers to other organizations and publications in the antique-radio field. So that everybody knows who's who, here's a short directory.

Radio Age is the monthly from the Mid-Atlantic Antique Radio Club. It's been running 16 8-1/2" x 11" pages per issue. Dues is \$20 per year, via Jay Kiessling, PO Box 67, Upperco, MD 21155. The club produces the yearly "Radioactivity" event in June in the Baltimore area.

The *Old Timer's Bulletin* is the quarterly of the Antique Wireless Association. It contains about 60 pages. Dues are \$12 per year or \$22 for two years (after May 1: \$15 and \$27 respectively), to AWA, Box E, Breesport, NY 14816. The club puts on the annual Rochester event in September and publishes the yearly *AWA Review*.

Antique Radio Classified is a stand-alone mostly-ads monthly. A typical issue is 114 pages: 24 pages of articles, 28 pages of display ads, 7 of announcements of events, 5 of business cards, and the rest want-ads classified as to "buy" vs. "sell." Subscriptions are \$34.95 by second-class mail (\$51.95 by first-class), from A. R. C. at PO Box 2, Carlisle, MA 01741, phone 508-371-0512.

The *Pittsburgh Oscillator* is the quarterly of the Pittsburgh Antique Radio Society. Dues: \$10 per year, via secretary Richard Harris, Jr., 407 Woodside Rd., Pittsburgh, PA 15221.

The *Jersey Broadcaster* is the monthly from the New Jersey Antique Radio Club. Previously at six pages, the latest issue contains eight. NJARC dues are \$15 per year, to NJARC, 92 Joysan Terrace, Freehold, NJ 07728.

GODS AND MYTHOLOGY AT ZENITH

Alan Douglas

A commentary on The Zenith Trans-Oceanic, The Royalty of Radios
by John H. Bryant, AIA, and Harold N. Cones, Ph. D.

What is a collector and historian of 1920s radio doing with a book on (gasp!) Transistor Radios? Well, I accidentally became the owner of a 3000-1 Trans-Oceanic ("Do you want that set over there too? That fake-chrome plastic thing?" "Nah. Wait a minute, it says 'Zenith' on it, guess I'll take it so it won't get tossed out.") When I washed off the sticky Life-Savers, and cleaned away the crud that had preserved the original finish almost perfectly, realized how well-made it was and how nicely styled, I took a real shine to it. I went through old *National Geographics* to find the ads, Sams folders, price guides - you know, hook-line-and-sinker. When my friends weren't looking, I even bought a nice 1000 model at a radio meet (\$85 - the prices in this book are inflated). I also have a 600 tube model in very nice shape (cost: \$0), though I can't say (yet) I have any interest in getting it running.

Actually, this is not so much a review of the entire book, as it is a commentary on Chapter 1. The book itself is fine, and anyone with even a slight interest in 1940s and later radios will find it of great interest and value. However, the first chapter reads like a historical novel: an entertaining story, fairly plausible, but having considerable liberties taken with the facts.

The authors apparently became intrigued with Trans-Oceanics in a roundabout way, beginning with a strong interest in short-wave listening and modern receivers, then the transistorized Trans-Oceanics, then the older tube models. Since a book on these radios wouldn't be complete without an explanation of how they came to be (especially as this is the best story), it was natural that the authors would dig diligently into the Zenith archives and publish what they found. But they unwittingly fell into the trap that the Commander set for them. Most corporate archives are one-sided, preserving the company's view of every story, and containing primarily company-written promotional material. Zenith is even worse, since for its first 35 years of existence it was totally controlled by one man, one who was not shy about Stalinizing the past. I will wager that nowhere in the entire archives does the name Thomas Pletcher survive, yet without him and his QRS piano-roll factory and music-dealer network in the 1921-23 era, Zenith would never have existed. His name, however, has been erased from company history. When his son dug out scrap-books and financial records from the attic for me, I was amazed at how little the official Zenith history and

truth coincided. I was so struck by this that I got permission to reprint the official history (after a couple of mushroom clouds at Zenith HQ when they finally read my text!) in my books, alongside my own reading of events.

Although the authors ostensibly used many different sources, newspaper and magazine articles as well as McDonald's own letters, every one of these "independent" articles was written with McDonald-furnished and McDonald-approved material. What the Commander himself didn't claim, his publicity department did. Some of this was done unintentionally, by the Zenith people actually believing their own early advertising claims, or through ignorance, or by the inevitable confusion of events reconstructed twenty years later from memory. But myths they are.

But where to start? How about the list of Zenith "firsts," a list that grew over the years as new publicity people lost track of what really had happened in the dim past?

"The First AC Radio." This claim is based on the Zenith X which was first advertised in September 1924 (August in the weeklies). Since this easily pre-dates the RCA Radiola 30 from a year later, it's an open-and-shut case, until one realizes that, although the X was advertised (for a few months) as an AC set, it was never made that way. Factory service literature consistently refers to it as a battery model. No AC model X is known to exist, and for that matter, no model X is known to exist at all (obviously I would love to be proven wrong!) so there is absolutely no basis for assuming that it could run on AC.

Furthermore the point is moot, since the AC-powered Dynergy was advertised in June, three months before. The Dynergy did exist, and still does, as I know of at least two.

"Single-Dial Tuning." Now really! I'm not kidding; this is repeated in the book. The claim is evidently based on the De Luxe models from September 1925, which did indeed tune TRF stages with a single dial, and an amazing chassis it is, too (I just inspected one last month). But Mohawk did the same thing in November 1924, nearly a year earlier, and if you don't mind a few trimmer capacitors to align the stages, the Magnavox and the Thermiodyne preceded that.

"Multiple Speakers." This is almost getting to the first-to-use-a-dial-pointer-in-the-shape-of-a-letter-A

category of trivia, I'll admit, but there it is. The X again is the contender, going head-to-head with the Grebe Synchrophase console, but it's a tie since they both came out in September 1924.

The last "first" to be considered is a bit more complex: **The portable radio.** Complex because it depends on definitions -- though the Zenith can't be considered the winner in any event.

Mike Schiffer has covered the portable very well in his fine book. He went to Zenith headquarters to see their "Companion" portable, and found that, to everyone's astonishment, it wasn't a Zenith at all, but a little known competitor called the Westburr. We went searching and found some newspaper and magazine ads, and it turns out that this Westburr actually preceded the Companion by some months. It was pictured in the February 1924 *Radio Dealer*, an issue whose advertising forms closed on January 15; therefore the set must have existed before that date. The Companion was first advertised in *Radio Digest* on May 10, 1924 and a month or two later in the national monthly magazines whose publication schedules were more extended. Somehow this four-month lag becomes "At nearly the same time (perhaps a month earlier)" in the professors' book, with the Companion emerging the winner. Reminds me of the "Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy" (great radio series!) gag about a publisher stealing text from the back of a cereal box, sending it back in time, and successfully suing the cereal maker for copyright infringement!

Could anything be more transparent than the Commander buying a Westburr and ordering his engineers to copy it?

My own favorite in this contest is the Operadio 2, which was in production by August 1923 and advertised in December (yes, nationally, if that makes any difference). Perhaps I'm just partial to radios that work. The Operadio sold, and stayed sold; the Westburr and the Companion didn't. The true definition of "portable" is "can be carried" but I prefer for radio purposes "self-contained with antenna, batteries and speaker." Some people seem bothered that they can't carry the Operadio by its handle while it's in operation, but why would anyone (in the 1920s, remember) want to? Would you carry a tube-type Trans-Oceanic around with the lid open and whip extended? And with its whip up, the transistor model doesn't even have a handle. By this definition, the Trans-Oceanic may not be a portable either!

Curiously, this book begins its story of the portable radio with a description and photo of Howard Armstrong's wedding gift to Marion, the portable superhet (the Major is called variously Edward, Edwin, E. Howard, and Howard, by the way). The photo cap-

tion says "ca. 1923" but it must date between August and November of that year. All very well, but this is not a production model, so why is it here, as the supposed first step in the "development of portable radios?" If one-offs are allowed in, what happened to the Bureau of Standards "Portaphone" constructed in the early summer of 1921, which was complete with loop and horn (and carrying handle), or Francis Dunmore's "Radio Valise" from May 1922, whose horn was completely enclosed like the Companion's? Very selective rules, these.

The other Zenith myth that needs deflating concerns Arctic exploration and short-wave transmissions. First, the assertion that MacMillan took a Companion with him for testing in 1923 is simply preposterous. It didn't exist then, and there is no record in his expedition reports of any such equipment. MacMillan departed Wiscasset, Maine on June 23, 1923 and returned on September 20, 1924 (it's all in the *National Geographic* for June 1925, and the 1925 expedition is written up in the November 1925 issue). Evidently the photo was taken on his next trip to Chicago.

More serious is the caption for the photo on page 16, showing Eskimos from Etah, Greenland broadcasting songs from the dining saloon of the Peary to "the USS Seattle off Tasmania." While this feat is not totally preposterous, a study of expedition logs and magazine reports shows that it did not happen, no matter what McDonald remembered twenty years later. This broadcast occurred on August 12, 1925 and was received at 9XN, Zenith's experimental short-wave station at Arlington Heights, on 40 meters, with the intention of rebroadcasting it on 322 meters. Unfortunately, the broadcast occurred without prior warning, starting at 10 PM Chicago time, and while it was received quite well, by the time all the engineers were found and the necessary equipment hooked up, it was 1 AM, little more than one Eskimo song was rebroadcast, and it was drowned out by a local thunderstorm. This is all detailed in a story in *Radio Digest* for August 29, 1925.

On August 12 the USS Seattle was anchored at Wellington, New Zealand, having left Melbourne on August 6. The only time the Seattle was "off Tasmania" was during her arrival on July 20 or at departure; otherwise Schnell was ashore in Melbourne. While MacMillan was said to have broadcast McDonald's voice and songs by expedition members to "all parts of the American continent" before the August 12 broadcast, it is quite unlikely that Schnell heard any of them. His log showed that he heard WNP enroute to Melbourne, but WNP was the Bowdoin, not the Peary which did all the broadcasting. The only two-way

communication with WAP (Peary) was on August 19 and afterward. And Schnell makes no mention, in a seven-page article in the January 1926 QST detailing his voyage, of any voice reception at all. His logs are printed in various issues of QST in late 1925, in the Traffic Dept. pages (which were not always included in newsstand issues).

Readers who haven't yet bought the book may be wondering who this Schnell was and what was the big deal with the USS Seattle. This was another venture mounted at about the same time as MacMillan's expedition, whereby ARRL Traffic Manager Fred Schnell joined the Navy for a fleet cruise to Australia to test short-wave communications. His work was a resounding success, and the friendly Zenith PR boys would have us believe that it was all McDonald's idea. However, there is not a shred of evidence that Zenith had anything to do with it, that Schnell ever met McDonald, or that the Navy ever bought any Zenith short-wave gear as a result. This was all dutifully asserted in the Trans-Oceanic book, with poor Admiral McLean becoming McClain. The full story of this cruise is in QST, in DeSoto's book *200 Meters and Down*, and in Howeth's History of Communications-Electronics in the United States Navy. Zenith is not mentioned in any of it.

The account of Zenith's growth on page 14 is seriously lacking in perspective. Being granted the first RCA patent license was not exactly akin to being knighted by the Queen. RCA would gladly have signed up anybody at that point, and was cutting deals and forgiving past royalties to do it. McDonald evidently thought he got some advantage by being first in line, though some later holdouts fared better. Zen-

ith did not, "within a few years," develop into one of the "largest radio manufacturers in the world." Even by 1934 Zenith was ninth in this country, and outsold by Philco twelve to one. By 1937 Zenith was up to third place, and after Philco blew it in the 1950s, Zenith rose to number two, behind RCA, but this is stretching "a few years" rather far, as well as underestimating other manufacturers worldwide. For instance, Philips as of 1963 employed 80,000 in the Netherlands, and the main complex at Eindhoven could have swallowed several Zeniths without a burp (Zenith employed 7500 at that time).

Now, none of this should deter anyone from buying the book; it's only there to flesh out the Trans-Oceanic story and can easily be revised for the second edition. But it does illustrate the risks of not examining one's sources. I might also mention, without going into a lot of unnecessary detail, that McDonald was not quite the saint implied in the book. There is no doubt that he was a genius in guiding Zenith through 35 shark-infested years, and in setting its course for the next 40, but many other people paid a very high price for his success.

Alan Douglas is perhaps the "dean" of American antique-radio historians, with articles appearing in the IEEE Spectrum, ARCA Gazette, A. R. C., OTB, BVWS Bulletin, etc. He holds the AWA Houck Award for Documentation and judges AWA's annual Equipment Contest. He produced a six-part article on the origins of Zenith in Radio Age and has an extensive chapter on the company's first years in Vol. III of his book Radio Manufacturers of the 1920s. - Ed.

OLD NEWS

1929: C. R. Leutz, Inc. have moved their plant from Long Island City to Altoona, Penn. (*Radio Industries*, Nov. 1929)

1929, cont.: Although the number of manufacturing establishments is small here, the Philadelphia area produces a large percentage of the radio receivers that are distributed in the country. The vast plants of Atwater Kent, Philco, and RCA Victor are included among the leaders in the industry, and in view of the business situation following the recent stock slump, it seemed logical to determine the status of these producers.

There has been some effect upon the radio market, as well as others, but all the radio manufacturers in Philadelphia state that while they have noticed an effect, they are not at the point where a shutdown of their manufacturing plants is imminent.

The Atwater Kent factory has curtailed its force and lowered the production schedule, but is continuing activities with as much vigor as when it was at peak production.

A cutting of production has been made in the Philco plant also, but they, too, state that the effect has been as great as one would be led to believe. The plant is now operating at normal capacity. Philco is stressing the new receiver introduced recently, known as the Model 95, a shielded-grid receiver incorporating an automatic volume control.

Across the river in Camden, the Victor Talking Machine Company, which forms a section of the Radio-victor Corporation of America, is producing a comparatively large number of radio receivers. Officials are not making any complaints concerning the present situation.

Plans for the future are being carefully considered and it is the feeling of the Philadelphia producers that there will be no recurrence of the events of the last few weeks. There seems a likelihood that the manufacturers will not do a great deal of changing in the design of their receiving units, so that, contrary to last winter's procedure, the coming of the new year will not bring with it the large number of new models which has been thought likely. (*Radio Industries*, Dec. 1929)

1930: The S. S. Arcadia, 19,000-ton Royal mail liner will be dry-docked and completely overhauled before serving as the cruise-ship of the Philco convention, which leaves from New York on Tuesday, May 27. Elaborate decorations will convert her main dining salon into a temporary convention hall for the business sessions, which will be held en route to Bermuda. After several days at Bermuda the 500 Philco delegates will return in time to attend the R. M. A. convention at Atlantic City. (*Radio Industries*, May, 1930)

1944: Those scarce tubes . . . 12SA7, 12SQ7, 12SK7, 50L6, 35Z5, 35L6, 1H5, 1A7 and 80 should be soon available again. For the W[ar] P[roduction] B[oard] has set up a program calling for the production of these and other hard-to-get tubes. The program specifically calls for the production of at least 4,500,000 tubes during the first quarter of 1944. Tubes will be marked "MR" for maintenance, repair, and operating supply purposes. This means that they will not be available for rated orders and thus will not be diverted from civilian channels.

The Service Man and consumer is grateful for this allotment. We hope that the WPB continues this progressive policy, and provides for, in the next quarter, an increased allotment, to accommodate the many receivers that are still in need of new tubes.

The radio tube black market seems to be on the loose again. From many quarters have come reports that black market trading of tubes is rampant. It is a dangerous and vicious practice and must be stamped out at once. It is detrimental to the war effort and to every Service Man! (*Service*, January, 1944)

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