



RETURN WITH US NOW

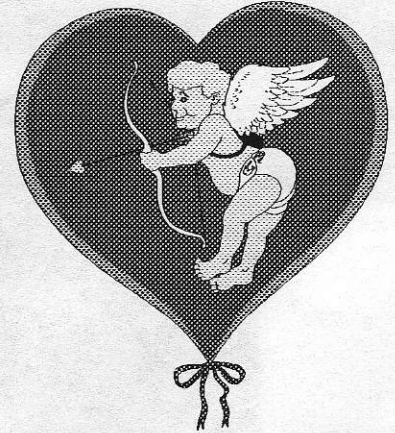
RADIO HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION OF
COLORADO



William Conrad (1920-). William Conrad was one of the best actors on radio. *Johnny Madero* (Mutual, 1947), *Nightbeat* (1950), *The CBS Radio Workshop* (CBS, 1956-1957) and many others. He is best remembered as Matt Dillon on *Gunsmoke* (CBS, 1952-1961)



BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING: There will be a board meeting will be **7:30 p.m., February 1, 1996** at Herb Duniven's home. All members are invited and encouraged to attend.



RETURN WITH US NOW... is the official publication of *The Radio Historical Association of Colorado, Inc.*, a non-profit organization. Cost of membership is **\$25.00** for the first year with \$15.00 for renewal.

Each member has full use of the club resources. For further information contact anyone listed below.



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- VICE-PRESIDENT.....Guy Albright, 786 S Quitman St, Denver CO 80219.....934-0184
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 - #3 (5001 up) Mika Rhoden, 3950 W Dartmouth Ave, Denver CO 80236.....937-9476
- DIRECTOR AT LARGE: David L Michael, 1999 Broadway, Lowery Suite, Denver CO 80202.....296-1456
- CORRESPONDING SECRETARY: David L Michael (as above)



From the

King's Roost

January meant clearing our desks of many items and finding some that had been overlooked but should be mentioned here.

Two R.H.A.C. members are very active also in ORCA. ORCA is a group that imports and circulates British radio programs. For those of you who are interested just write to:

Barry Hill
Rt 1, Box 197
Belpre OH 45714

or:

Tom Monroe
2055 Elmwood Ave
Lakewood OH 44107

We received a note from one of our members who was quite pleased that he had found a (hard cover) book in a used book store. There are a lot of good books that enter the marketplace selectively through these used book stores. We certainly do encourage you to take an hour or so once in a while to browse through one of these used book stores. Remember, their stock changes all the time.

Hence, it is always worthwhile to make repeated visits.

Most proprietors will permit you to leave your name and phone number with your interests. Don't just sit back and wait, keep shopping.

The book Lon McCart enjoyed so much was "Tune in Tomorrow" by Mary Jane Higby, published in 1966, 1968. Does anybody know the lady? Is she still among us? Lon would like to talk to her and tell her how much he enjoyed her book. Just drop us a note and we will forward it on to Lon.

Denver R.H.A.C. Merwin Smith worked with Armed Forces Radio in the Pacific Theater during the Korean conflict.

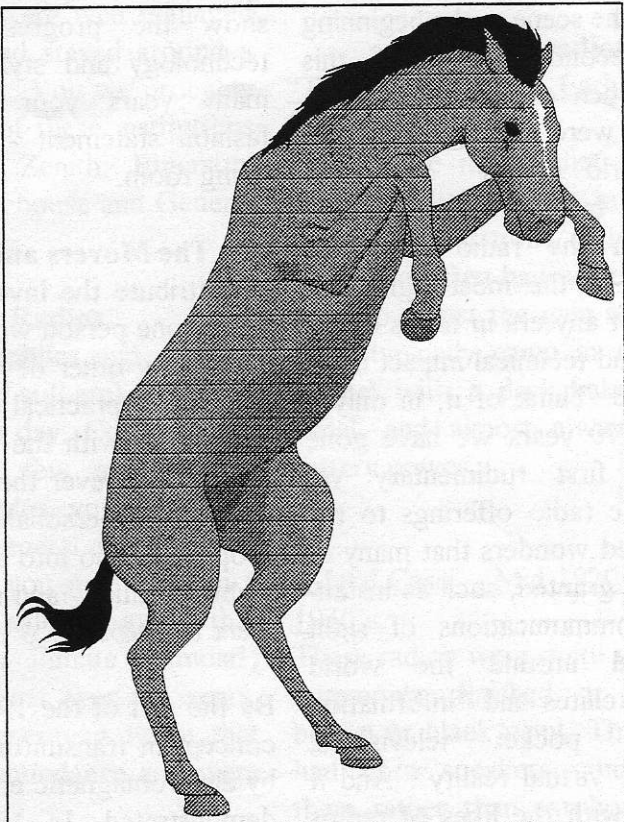
Merwin would like to get in touch with others who worked with Armed Forces Radio and share some of their experiences.

We have received several book reviews with requests to

publish the reviews. One of these was a full three pages. We do not want to permit ourselves to be just a marketing tool for these people. One publisher sent us a book...and we will give a short review of that book when we add it to our lending library.

We are also willing to mention good dealers once in a while. Normally we do not choose to carry ads. Maybe just once in a while we will carry an ad for one of our members—but don't count on it.

At last count we have 445 R.H.A.C. members in 40 states and five Canadian Provinces.



The Wireless Becomes a Reality

A look at early radio and some of the visionaries who made it all possible

by Larry Weide, President of the Colorado Radio Collectors Antique Radio Club

The world is brought into our living rooms

Imagine, if you will, a world where the only form of inexpensive mass communication is the newspaper. A world where news is often old by the time you hear it. Where professional entertainment can be enjoyed only rarely.

Envision then how you would feel if you were told that now almost everyone could have a machine that will bring the world of news and entertainment right into their living rooms. Yes, it was RADIO, the wireless had been invented and is available for commercial use.

Such was the scene at the beginning of the second decade of this century, when commercially available radios were starting to emerge. The world was absolutely astounded by this development. Since then the radio has been proven to be the most significant invention of any era in terms of the its social and technical impact upon human kind. Think of it, in only a little over 70 years we have gone from the first rudimentary yet unbelievable radio offerings to the sophisticated wonders that many of us take for granted, such as instantaneous communications of sight and sound around the world through satellites and "information highways", pocket televisions, stereo and "virtual reality". And it all started with the likes of radios that are being presented at Lakewood's Historical Belmar

Village museum until March, 16, 1996.

Your radio was a fashion statement

The radios in this show are from the private collections of members of the Colorado Radio Collectors. This is an organization that is dedicated to the preservation of the history and artifacts of radio technology. While some of the members prefer to only collect, others also enjoy restoring radios that have seen better days.

These radios were chosen for display as examples of what was typical for the particular age. They show the progression of both technology and style. Indeed, for many years your radio *was* a fashion statement - right in your living room.

The Movers and Shakers

To attribute the invention of radio to any one person would be absurd. Like many other developments, the road to a practical radio product was paved with the work of many people. However there were a few exceptional personalities that really propelled radio into a commercially viable product - and not all of them were inventors.

By the end of the 19th century the concept of transmitting information by electromagnetic energy had been demonstrated. In 1896 Guglielmo Marconi, the famous Italian engineer, had sent the first wireless

messages across the Atlantic ocean. These were morse code like signals and very soon thereafter this became the way ships communicated with land bases.

One of the biggest problems facing early radio engineers was that the receivers of the time relied on a simple crystal to convert the radio waves into sounds in an earphone (yes, a crystal set). These signals were usually quite weak. This very significant problem was solved in 1906 when Dr. Lee deForest, an ambitious young man who may have been more of a clever tinkerer and businessman than an engineer, invented the first crude but practical signal amplifying radio tube. The practical application of his "Audion" tube, although soon to be vastly improved by others, would remain the essential part of all radios (and televisions) until the introduction of the semiconductor transistor in the mid 1950's.

Perhaps some of you readers can remember peering into the back of your radios and seeing those glass radios tubes lit up inside with what seemed to be a mysterious warm red glow.

Starting in 1912 Edwin Armstrong, a difficult man but a truly brilliant engineer, began to invent circuits that were to make the radio into the modern, efficient and easy-to-use device that we know today. Not only did he invent the Superheterodyne circuit, which eventually

became the standard of all radios, but he also invented FM radio. Unfortunately, Armstrong had continuous patent fights with deForest and others. Although the engineering community was strongly on the side of Armstrong, he eventually lost a good deal of these battles in the courts. In 1954, a broken man, he committed suicide by jumping out of a window. Interestingly enough, over the course of the next 15 years, his widow, through much effort, eventually won back all of his patent claims.

One of the men that Armstrong first worked for, then fought with, was David Sarnoff, the president and power of RCA. Sarnoff, the consummate salesman, saw radio for what it was - the magic box as it were, which everyone was going to have. Through the vision of people like Sarnoff, the radio and all that it presented soon became an indelible part of the American experience, which has grown into the world of home information and entertainment that we know today.

The Companies

By the beginning of the 1920's, radio was established as a practical communications and entertainment medium. In 1920 KDKA in Pittsburgh became the first radio station to begin regular daily programming. By 1924 there were 1400 stations in the U.S., and the public was spending 350 million dollars a year on radios - a third of all furniture sales. In 1926 David Sarnoff and RCA established NBC as the first radio network.

The opportunity for radio manufacturers was almost beyond belief. Everyone wanted a radio. Even the smaller companies who couldn't or wouldn't pay the royalties for the

better circuitry (such as Armstrong's Superheterodyne circuit) still sold all that they could produce. Demand pushed technical development to a furious pace - much like what we see today in the computer industry.

There were radios for every budget, starting with an example like the little Crosley "Pup" which you'll see in the Belmar show, to models such as a limited edition 1926 gold-plated radio-phonograph console by RCA that sold for a then budget-busting price of \$1000.

As you can imagine competition among the manufactures was fierce. During the radio sales boom years of the late 20's through the 30's (the Depression notwithstanding), many companies quickly blossomed then just as quickly failed. However, there were a number of companies that got into the business early, were well managed and financed, and stayed around a very long time. You've probably heard of some of these institutions such as RCA, Zenith, Emerson, Crosley, Westinghouse and General Electric.

The Radios

Just like automobiles and clothes, radios were (and still are) subject to the style of the day. Consequently by spending a few moments to review these styles, you should be able to affix a general date to many old radios that you might see in a store or a yard sale. Be aware that there were an infinite (almost!) number of designs over the years, so I'm only describing those that were made in abundance and were fairly common.

Console Radios

Console Radios - early 1920's to early 1930's:

These typically had carvings or molding features with small inset tuning dials. Because of the technology of the times, some of these radios are quite heavy, and collectors often refer to them as "boat anchors". These designs were almost always on legs. The length of the legs caused these radios to be advertized as "lowboys" and "highboy"s.

Console Radios - Mid 1930's to early 1940's (Fig. 5):

Some of these radios became the ultimate blend of high style and superior radio technology. They often were massive without legs. They usually commanded the central location of your living room - just as your TV set does now. Perhaps the Zenith "big black dial" radios were the most popular of this type.

Table top radios

"Three Dialers" - Early to mid 1920's - (Fig. 1):

These were radios that had more than one dial to turn in order to tune in the stations (often three). They also often had more than one knob to adjust the gain or volume. They typically came in a wooden cabinet with a dark bakelite front panel, and almost always ran on battery power.

"Metal Case" - Mid 1920's to early 1930's:

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household power, so you will likely find both kinds. These radios were some of the first ones to have only one tuning dial knob.

“Cathedral” - Early 1930’s (Fig. 2): Perhaps no other style distinguishes the antique radio more than this one. It of course has the recognizable church like arch top, it’s always made of wood, and often has a quality radio for the times inside of it. By this time the controls were standardized to the ones that we would be familiar with today.

“Tombstone” - Mid 1930’s (Fig. 3):

This radio’s unfortunate moniker tells you what it typically looked like. It was often very pretty but quite somber. It too was always made of wood as were the better radios made during the 1930’s. These designs came into vogue when the movement toward more “modern” motifs in furniture began.

“Bakelite” - Mid 1930’s to end of the 1940’s (Fig. 4):

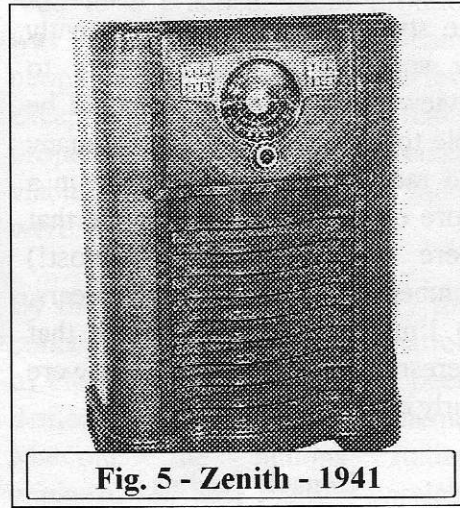
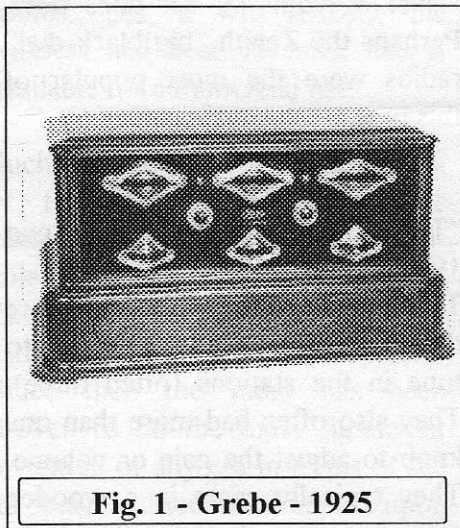
This was the first type of plastic radio. Because these radio cabinets were made in a molding process, they came in a fantastic variety of styles. Eventually the pressures of manufacturing cost and fashion led the plastic radio to become the mainstay of table top models until the advent of stereo components.

“Catalin” - Late 1930’s to mid 1940’s (Fig. 6):

Typically these were common table top radios. Their cabinets, however, were made of a beautifully marbled plastic that was never used again for radios after this era.

Do you have a question about one of your radios, or you would like some more information about the show? Perhaps you liked to find a good home for a tired old radio. In any case, please feel free to call me.

Larry Weide (303)-758-8382
R.H.A.C. and C.R.C.A.R.C./



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