



This month we are once again reprinting some of our favorite articles from past issues of RWUN. The situation is that our publisher, Carol Tiffany, is recovering from an illness that has kept her away from her computer. She should be back next month. Anyone wishing to send Carol regards can find her email address on page 2.

This lead article this month is a reprint from our August, 1992 newsletter. It originally ran in the AARP Bulletin of the same year. As you'll see, the article is all about the radios that received all those wonderful shows we love.

As it happens, our RHAC President Larry Weide is also an active member of the Colorado Radio Collectors Antique Radio Club here in Denver. At the end of this article Larry will have an update on antique radios for us.

RADIO DAYS

Anyone old enough to recall the days before television remembers that radios, large or small and usually with gleaming wooden cabinets, were the nerve centers of the country's living rooms.

Around them huddled America's families, with only each other to look at, listening intently to Jack Benny's jokes and Benny Goodman's notes, President Franklin Roosevelt's fireside chats and Edward R. Murrow's London reports.

After decades of dusty silence in grandma's attic, nearly three-quarters of a century of radios are sputtering to life again in thousands of American homes. This time the people crowded around them are a swiftly-growing family of collectors.

"Our objective is to preserve this equipment, to let people know about it. It's a heritage," says Bruce Kelley, 77, a longtime collector. Forty years ago he and two other men founded what now is America's largest and oldest radio collectors club, the 4000-member Antique Wireless Association.

"Collecting got off to a slow start in the '50s and '60s, picked up some in the '70s, and really took off in the '80s," says Brian Belanger, 51, a collector and newsletter editor of the Mid-Atlantic Antique Radio Club (MAARC). Founded in 1984 with 15 members, it now has about 850 and is America's largest regional radio club.

During the same time the number of regional radio clubs has grown with similar speed. Today there are two national clubs and about 40 regional ones, Belanger says, and more regional clubs are forming.

Collectors have various motives: nostalgia, the beauty of the venerable radios or the fun of being able to repair them.

Belanger, an electrical engineer from Rockville, Md., himself heard the siren song of radio collecting in the late 1970s. One day he was killing time in a shopping center while his wife bought fabric and wandered into an antique store. He came out with his first antique radio, an aptly named "American Beauty," made in 1926 in Missouri. He was hooked; he now has "about 80 radios, the last time I counted."

Days he works with the most modern technology as deputy director of advanced technology program of the National Institute of Standards and Technology. Evenings he works with the technology of the '20s and '30s, repairing his venerable radios at home.

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2008 Convention Schedules

33rd Friends of Old-time Radio Convention, Oct 23 – 26, 2008 Holiday Inn, Newark, NJ; For info: Jay Hickerson, 27436 Desert Rose Ct, Leesburg, FL 34748 (352) 727-6731, JayHick@aol.com, web site: <http://www.fotr.net>

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They include wonderful old names, now long gone, in the history of American radio. There's an unusual Federal 61, a hard-to-find black-fronted box with 14 dials, made in 1924. A 1922 Aeriola, Sr., by Westinghouse: You had to listen through headphones. A battery-powered Radiola 18, with its long-and-low shape.

And the classic "antique radio" to most Americans -- a graceful, arch-shaped set known as cathedral-style. Many maker built cathedrals; Belanger has several, including a restored 1931 Philco model 70. A dominant 30s brand, Philco epitomizes antique radios to many Americans.

Collecting antique radios is practically an addiction, Belanger says.

Joe Koester knows what he means. A 50-year-old Defense Department manager from Laurel, Md., he says dryly: "I never met an antique radio I didn't like," paraphrasing Will Rogers' view of people.

Koester, a founder and president of the Mid-Atlantic Antique Radio Club, has certainly met a lot of radios: he admits to having "about 250" in his collection.

Kelley has been collecting since before Belanger and Koester were born: He and a friend started in 1936. When they saw a radio they thought should be preserved "we repaired it and set it aside," say Kelley, fittingly now the curator of the Antique Wireless Association's museum.

The kinds of radios they set aside then are much desired now. Particularly in demand by collectors are cathedrals; Atwater Kent "breadboards" from the early '20s made without cabinet and with innards fastened atop a breadboard-shaped piece of wood; spendid-toned Scott radios; and colorful, Catalin-plastic sets of the late '30s and '40s.

Prices of these and other antique radios depend on condition, manufacturer and model, and location (the East Coast is more expensive). Most range from \$50 to several hundred; some, like particularly desirable Catalins, run into the thousands.

As with anything else, high prices reflect scarcity. But most collectors think some oldtime radios will always be available. One reason, Koester says: "Younger collectors are also interested in the radios of their youth, and are beginning to collect the much-later transistor radios and TVs.

Many radios aren't working when collectors purchase them. Their new owners restore a lot of them, both for the pleasure of seeing them gleam and the joy of hearing them crackle.

And when they crackle they bring back another era. Once in a while Belanger rigs up a30s set so that he can listen to a recording of an old radio show through its speaker. With 1930s fidelity the raspy voice of Jack Benny fills the room, deadpanning a punch line and convulsing an audience.

"It's fun," Belanger says. "At night you can draw the drapes and turn the lights down low and by the glow of your radio listen to Jack Benny. It's a time Warp."

Antique Radios come back to life in

Denver

By Larry Weide

Just about the time that the above article was being printed in 1992, I was strolling through what use to be a monthly antique mart at the Denver Stock Show Complex. I had been interested in electronics ever since I was a kid, and now I was one year away from the end of a 33 year career with IBM (you do the math). However, until that moment, I had never thought of old tube radios as antiques - heck, I was there for goodness sakes!

Well, anyway, as I was strolling along the aisles of the show, I came upon a display by the Colorado Radio Collectors Antique Radio Club (CRC). Like in the movies, the music started playing from somewhere. In less time than it takes to tell about it I was hopelessly involved in the hobby of collecting and restoring old tube radios.

I'm pretty lucky too in that the CRC is a very active club. Along with regular member meetings we also have auctions and shows where the public can be involved. I've also acquired a group of special interest friends much like I had back as a kid. I tell my wife that I'm practicing "safe childhood".

I certainly have to echo all that the preceding article had to say, but now that some time has past since it was written there's more to the hobby than ever before. Perhaps the biggest impact has been the internet, and for at least a couple of reasons.

First of all there are the on-line auction sites led by eBay. Where it used to be that the availability of collectable radios were often fairly local for most folks, now everyone has access to them essentially from anywhere in the world. However, that access

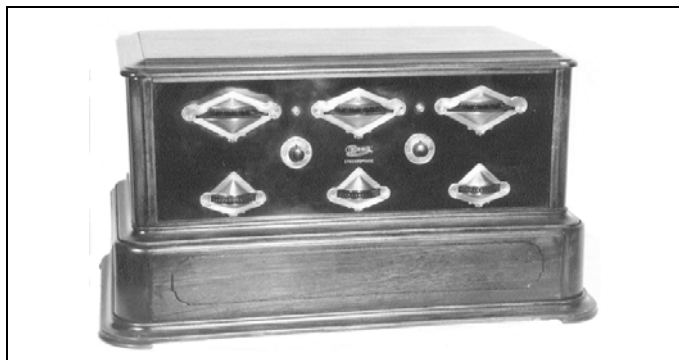
also comes at a cost. The internet auction gives a huge audience a chance to bid and that alone has been a big factor in the rise of radio values.

The second thing that the internet has done is make a fund of knowledge, help and documentation available for those who need such information. For example, all you have to do is logon to an antique radio chatroom, ask a question and it's likely there will be numerous folks tripping over each other to answer your question(s). If you go to the web site www.nostalgiaair.net, you can find the circuit diagrams for almost every radio ever made from about 1925 to the middle 50's.

Radios really started to become popular when regular scheduled programming started in the early 20's. Soon after that more money was being spent on radios than furniture and tube radios became a major growth industry for the next 20 years.

Radio companies, like cars companies, used a lot of "sizzle" to make sales and every year new cabinet styles came out. Consequently things like cabinet styling, dial shapes and some features allow you to generally date a radio you might find at a yard sale, an antique store or wherever. Here are some pictures of radios whose style were very common in the particular years in which they were made.

Mid 1920's - "Three Dialer", usually battery operated. These were the first radios that practically anybody could use, had good reception and were reasonably priced.



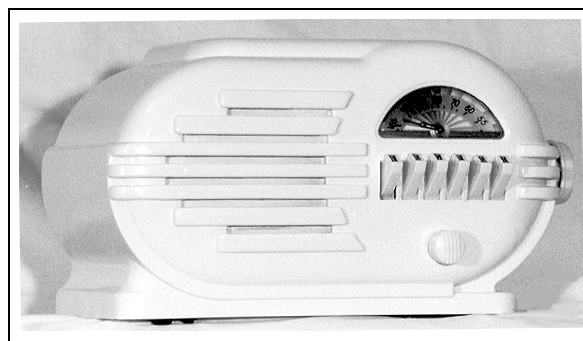
Early to Mid 1930' - "Cathedral". By this time many radios began using the "Superheterodyne" circuit which is the circuit standard to this very day.



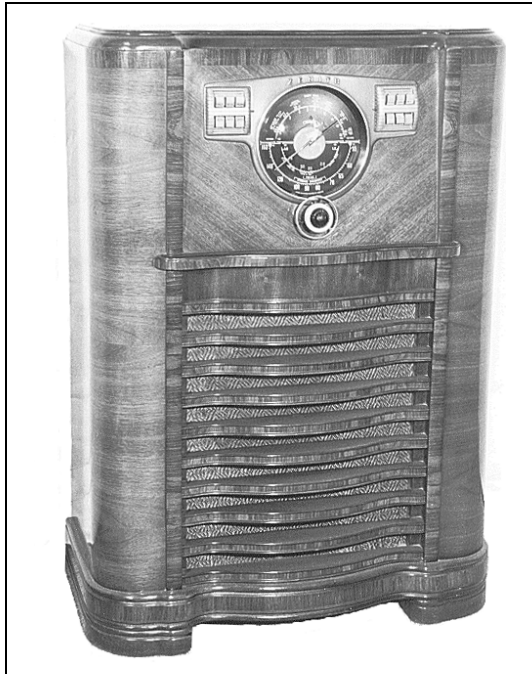
Mid 1930's - "Tombstone", also had round dials



Mid 1930's to Late 1940's - Bakelite, This material allowed radios to be much cheaper and come in an amazing number of shapes and sizes



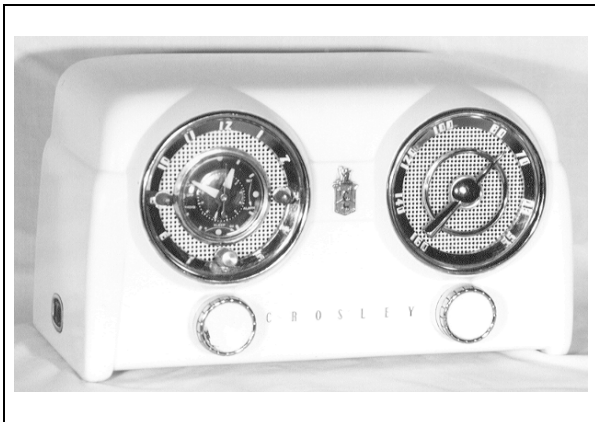
Mid 1930's to Early 1940's - High powered consoles, green "eye" tubes, push buttons, shortwave and round and rectangular Dials



Mid 1950's to Present - Transistor radios. Tubes in radios were soon to be gone, with the industry being taken over by the marvelous invention of the semiconductor.



Mid 1940's to Early 1960's - Plastic. Radios by this time had become commodity items where price was the most important issue. This great little kitchen radio had a clock, an alarm and could turn on your coffee pot.



To help you identify a specific radio, by looks or by brand and model number, try going to; <http://radioatticarchives.com/archive.php?page=a1> Here you will find a couple of thousand radio pictures arranged by brand.

If I can be of some help with any radio questions, please contact me at the RHAC email address - rhac_otr@yahoo.com.

Early 20th century radios on display at the CRC's 2008 Show and Contest.





New in the Tape and CD Libraries

by Maletha King

This month is one of the two newsletter issues per year when we do not publish a catalog update insert. These are the times when we gather, filter out and record master media material for library inclusion.

So, enjoy this month's extra two pages of OTR stories, and the best of the "4th" to all.

Did You Know Department What happened to Jack Benny's Maxwell?

We found this little squibb in the March 1992 RWUN, reprinted from Radio Life, 10/25/1942



Jack Benny's old Maxwell, with its loose bolts and bailing wire, may have given Rochester a lot of headaches, but when it came time to part with it his tender heart "jest about busted wide open" and the glistening tears rolled down his cheeks. You see, last week Jack gave his Maxwell to the scrap drive to do its part toward winning the war.

This gargantuan gesture took place before the Army itself at William Field, Arizona, with Merrill Stubbs, Chief of the Auto Graveyard Section, Conservation Division, on hand to see that the ancient chariot received the proper ritual.

It really was quite a sacrifice on Benny's part as the gags about the old "heap" have been very popular and now they must cease. We will be curious to see what new object will be target for Benny's cracks.

Meet the Librarian This Month Mika Rhoden

By Larry Weide, Pres. RHAC



In trouble? Who 'ya gonna call? Of course, it's this month's featured RHAC librarian, Mika Rhoden. You see, Mika's day job is a 911 dispatcher for Denver Fire and Rescue. Yet, as busy as he is, Mika has found the time to be one of our librarians for almost 18 years now.

I went over to Mika's home to take this picture and get a little biographic information. There I met his lovely wife Adrian and their son Gage. I also found myself drooling over the original 1945 Wurlitzer model 1015 jukebox (the "bubbler") all lit up in their living room.

Mika, originally from Nebraska, met Adrian in the late 1980's, married and settled down in Denver's Harvey Park area. They both loved OTR since "forever" and soon found themselves involved with RHAC.

Mika, thanks for watching over all of us, and thanks for taking such good care of our library subscribers.

Laughs Make a Star of Peary - Hal Peary

From Radio Life, 8/24/1941 - Reprinted RWUN, Sept/1991

"You're a hard man, McGee," he said. And millions of people laughed. The laughs came loud and long, those laughs of the American radio audience, and they inspired a new program.

For Fibber McGee and Molly's "chum," Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve, has graduated to stardom, and a big-time radio program built around him (to be called "The Great Gildersleeve") goes on the air August 31, 1941 (NBC, 2:30 p.m.). It is believed to be the first time a character created on one radio program has been transplanted to become the star of another.

It's a success story about which everybody's happy. Fibber and Molly (Jim and Marian Jordan) were the first to offer congratulations. The day the news was public property the NBC parking lot attendant met us with, "Did you hear about Mr. Peary's new show? Isn't that great for him?"

We walked along NBC's humming corridors and heard a nameless radio actor say to a guide: "Hal Peary's made the grade. I knew he would."

Harold Peary is Gildersleeve's creator. We decided then and there to investigate him, to see what there was about him that had prompted a sponsor like Kraft to single him out. Above all, we wanted to find out for ourselves what there was about him that radiated such universal goodwill.

We nosed the old jalopy toward the Valley, to Encino, where the Peary's recently built a ranch home. Greeting us was a medium-tall fellow, rotund and jolly, with thick jet-black hair and a mustache and humorous brown eyes. It was Hal Peary and right away we knew what we had gone

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to find out.

Peary is pleased to heaven about his good fortune but he's taking it in his stride. There is nothing that is not solid and substantial about him. His voice is on the air but his feet are on the ground. Radio is his business--has been for 13 years.

It was 1928, Peary told us, that he first went into commercial radio. Previous to that time he was gaining his experience in stock as a singer and actor. His first rung of success was achieved when he became known as "The Spanish Serenader" over NBC in San Francisco.

Radio was young then. There was a shortage of radio actors, so young Hal Peary volunteered to fill in gaps. He clicked and achieved wide popularity

among Pacific Coast listeners. His first program with name recognition was the "Spotlight Review" in which he and Charlie Marshall, cowboy singer, presented "Mr. Marshall and Mr. Peary."

From San Francisco to Chicago and back to Los Angeles went

Peary, finger-printing every type of radio program conceivable. He is a natural dialectician and that ability, plus the flexibility of his voice, has made him in demand for a wide diversity of roles. Often he played as many as four or five (once it was eight) different characters in one show.

"I was a radio utility man," he laughed. We think no more literal description could be made. One of the few radio actors of Portuguese descent, he speaks both Portuguese and Spanish fluently. The Americanese dialect of



other languages need only be heard once by him and he can reproduce them, like a musician who plays by ear.

If someone is in need of an actor for any kind of a man's voice, he need only call Peary, who can play them all--and their sons, too. Once in Chicago, he was lightly known as the "man who carries colored pencils." Having to keep up with himself as four different people, he had devised the scheme of marking each role on the script with a different colored pencil--red for the Chinese cook, blue for the Cockney bar-keeper, green for a Mexican peddler and black for a "heavy."

Peary, himself, finds it difficult to remember all the different types of characters he's played, but it was as "Gildersleeve" the great big guy with the booming voice and the distinctive, heavy laugh that he reached the peak of interpretation.

"Gildersleeve" was born in the mind of Harold Peary in 1937. The actor had migrated to Chicago for big-time radio. The West Coast, particularly Los Angeles, had yet to achieve its present recognition as a broadcasting center. Most transcontinental shows were still emanating from New York or Chicago. In Chicago Peary had taken part in numerous big shows, such as "Flying Time" and "Madame Courageous." Then he joined up with Fibber McGee and Molly, a funny, homespun production beginning to make its big impression on radio audiences.

Peary was playing different parts on the McGee show when one of them struck his fancy. He began thinking of it when he was having his morning coffee or waiting for his cues at rehearsals. Gag lines popped into his head and before he knew it he had visualized for himself, and the show, a new character, a big guy with big ideas and menacing undertones but a heart as simple and warm-hearted as Fibber himself--a perfect sparring partner for the star.

He presented his idea to Writer Don Quinn. Quinn incorporated lines into the script for the new regular character, after tacking on to it the most humorously pompous name he could make up, and Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve made his debut to the airwaves. He was an instantaneous hit, proof of the pudding being that little boys began mimicking the famous laugh.

The Fibber McGee and Molly show moved to Los Angeles a short time later, and Peary returned to California with it. It was quite apropos that

Peary's chance came on the West Coast, for he is a Californian, born and bred. He was born thirty-five years ago in San Leandro and is descended from a pioneer California family, holders of a great Spanish land grant. Being in Encino, it is conveniently near NBC's Hollywood Radio City, and it provides an outlet for the love of the land that has been handed down to him for generations.

For the "stock" on his ranch he pointed with pride to "Ginger," a hybrid Springer and Cocker Spaniel, offspring of prize dogs belonging to the Jordans and Tuffy Goff (of "Lum and Abner"). "Ginger" had come bouncing in about that time followed by his mistress, who was carrying a plate of home-made cookies.

Mrs. Peary is dark and pretty and vivacious. They met in Arizona when Peary was just starting out in stock. She was formerly Betty Jourdain, a dancer. They have been married now twelve years.

Peary has two hobbies: Handball and collecting crime photographs. Why the latter, no one knows. However, they're being a bit neglected right now. He's too busy getting things lined up for his new program. He's going about it in that characteristic businesslike fashion, helping Producer Cecil Underwood (who's going to divide his time between the new show and Fibber McGee and Molly) and Writer Len Levinson.

The one thought uppermost on Harold Peary's mind at the moment is for the success of "The Great Gildersleeve"--the radio show the laughs of the nation built.



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