

# SOUND WAVES

## VRPS Spring 2013

### From the President



Well, I am pumped!! Yesterday, March 16, was our annual Spring Auction, and I am still on a high from the overwhelming success of this event. I won't relive all of the successes, but I want to touch on some highlights. Attendance was terrific!! Wow, new members, folks we have not seen in a while, the regulars...the Senter East building was packed!! Someone mentioned to me it was the improving economy. Well, I don't care what the reason, I was excited to see almost 100 folks in attendance. Soooo much stuff to auction. Stuff came out of the wood work, including at least 3 estates.

I really gotta thank Jim Collings. He did double duty running the computer input and spelling me when I ran out of breath. Nice to have a break

occasionally.

Wanda and Beverly (broken foot and all) kept up with the manual recording of all sales. Those records come in extremely handy. I often fail to give enough credit to those who help behind me in the auction, keeping things coming and going off the auction block. Mike Grimes and his team are just super. A special shout out to David Hickman who answered a last minute call for assistance on that team as we realized the volume of auction items would require an additional hand. Thanks David. Ron and Dee (mostly Dee) are crucial in getting folks signed up for bidder numbers and registering new members.

The check out team of Bill Jewell and Randy James made the process go smoothly and quickly. One other quick note about the auction...this one not being different from any of our others. Donations...we love them. So many of you so generously donated items, either from the gitgo or after a "no bid", to the club. The donations...and the money that is raised from their sale, is really important to keeping our organization on solid financial footing. We are indeed on good footing.

I mentioned in the last Soundwaves, that after each auction, there seems to be stuff left behind...mostly unintentionally...that I usually wind up taking temporary custody of. Yesterday was not the exception. I am now the proud caretaker of a really nice man's jacket. Contact me to identify, and it can go back on your coat rack and not mine.

Good hunting and see you at the April meeting.

Jim

## Notes from the January Meeting



V.P. Randy James conducted our meeting. He informed us of the (then) upcoming Houston Vintage Radio Association (HVRA) on Feb 8 and 9 and their activities in restoring the battleship Texas radio room, including a guided tour by Bill Werzner. He also informed us that the new owner of the ARC publication promised to catch up soon in getting his publication out on time. Randy introduced our Program director Mike Grimes.

[See Mystery Objects, page 5.]

Mike introduced Jason Phillips, who was our presenter for this meeting, regarding the topic of cabinet refinishing. Jason presented his topic from the viewpoint of his experience as a professional refinisher/restorer of cabinetry and furniture of all sorts. He kept in mind that the hobbyist might take slightly different approaches because they may have more time on their hands and less professional equipment to work with. Jason stressed that a good single coat

of finish is often sufficient. He demonstrated staining and coating a wood sample with polyurethane (later to be rubbed with 4/0 steel wool after drying). He suggested that bristle brushes are to be preferred over foam brushes, especially since you can get them so cheaply nowadays. He moved on to the topic of veneer application, a common need for radio restoration in light of the plain woods used to manufacture the basic radio cabinets – mostly poplar and birch. A major supplier of all types of veneer is Certainly Wood Inc. ([certainlywood.com](http://certainlywood.com)). They have an amazing website. An important tip was to never try using paper-backed veneer – it's so thin that it will sand right through very easily. Another tip had to do with making a tight joint between two sheets. The way to accomplish this is to prepare the two sheets by sandwiching them together and clamping them between two boards with only their edges exposed enough for trimming. That way, they are trimmed at the same time and match automatically. For cutting and fitting veneer, a veneer saw (available e.g. at Rockler) produces very good edges. It has a thin blade with fine teeth along curved edges. Jason recommends contact cement as the adhesive for veneer – three coats each on the veneer and the work piece, letting it dry to the touch between coats. When applying the veneer, you start at one edge and work across, but to keep the veneer from being grabbed by accidentally touching the work piece ahead of you, place a few pieces of dowel on the work piece and remove them one-by-one as you go. The veneer should then be firmly bonded using a roller-ended hand tool (veneer roller or brayer) starting at one edge and working across to make sure there are no bubbles of air. A heat gun will soften the glue for good bonding.

Jason discussed the next step – applying a finish to the piece. He said that a single coat of lacquer is adequate, when properly applied - if polyurethane is used, the coats are all separate layers not bonded together. There was a lot of discussion, with many questions for Jason from members about materials, procedures and sources of supplies. He said that oil-based stains are the best choice because they are forgiving and allow sanding and repeating if necessary. Stains can be removed with oxalic acid. There are a number of choices of coating materials such as varnish, shellac, lacquer. He uses Mohawk products for touch-up work. They have many colors of touch-up lacquer in convenient felt-tipped applicators. They are available at Elliot's Hardware in Dallas or at Master-Touch products in Arlington ([javier@mastertouch.com](mailto:javier@mastertouch.com), tel. 817-701-4250).

Jason recommends Tre-Wax for a final waxed finish.

Author's Notes: Another adhesive for veneer is regular Elmer's carpenter glue, thinned with water 2/1. It provides a lot of working time and is good for curved surfaces, but it requires drying time and the overall application of adequate pressure. I have used bulky foam rubber with sheets of wood or sawed-out curved pieces of wood to compress the foam rubber. The wood piece is clamped or bound in place to squeeze the rubber down enough to make sure there is pressure over all of the glued area. Binding straps of the kind that can be highly tensioned can also be used to help apply pressure to the wood. For flat areas, a board can be set on top of the foam rubber and heavy objects used to weight it down.

Many times, a MIN-WAX product called Wipe-on-Poly will renew an old finish to a nice appearance without stripping the original finish. It will fill scratches and provide a nice satin hand-rubbed finish. (Before applying, be sure to stain areas and spots that need it).

Shellac provides a very nice finish, but be sure it is fresh (test it first).

Oxalic acid is an ingredient of Barkeepers Friend brass polish. Used as a dampened paste, it will remove tarnish or bleach wood, but it is an abrasive product, so do not rub unless you want the abrasive action as well.

Mohawk toning lacquers are very useful for exactly matching original finish tones and texture. They are also available at the referenced locations. Other Mohawk sources in the D/FW metroplex are: Knox Paints and Wood Finisher's Source.

Bill McKeown

## Notes from the February Meeting

V.P. Randy James conducted our meeting of about 20 people. He filled us in on the recent HVRA banquet/convention and reminded us of the upcoming spring auction on March 16 at the Senter East building in Irving. Also, our April meeting will feature John Kusching, who will give a presentation about the Radiomuseum website ([www.radiomuseum.org](http://www.radiomuseum.org)). Randy introduced our Program director Mike Grimes.

[See Mystery Objects, page 5.]

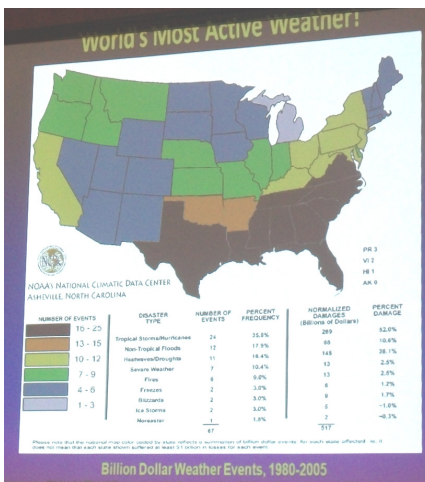
Mike Grimes introduced our program presenter VRPS member Walt Zaleski, Jr. His topic was Weather. He has

been with the National Weather Service (NWS) for about 35 years.

Walt presented a wealth of information about the Service, and about weather. He discussed its many functions, including how weather information is gathered, how and to whom it's distributed and regulated and what causes the many weather conditions that we experience. The organization was initiated in 1870 by President Grant. The NWS is a very large operation, with 122



offices having about 25 people in each of them. There are 122 Radars, across the country that provide weather imagery along with a number of polar orbiting satellites. There are 90+ weather balloons launched across the continent twice each day to provide temperature and velocity data for all altitudes up to 100,000 feet. The information gathered is analyzed (by Walt and others) and used to predict weather, provide weather warnings to the public and to make available information for the airlines to avoid rough or dangerous flight conditions. There are about 1000 radio transmitters that provide 24/7 weather information to the public and airlines. Many small stations are cleared to re-broadcast NWS signals. By law, all weather warnings broadcast by radio and TV stations must originate from NWS (and NOT

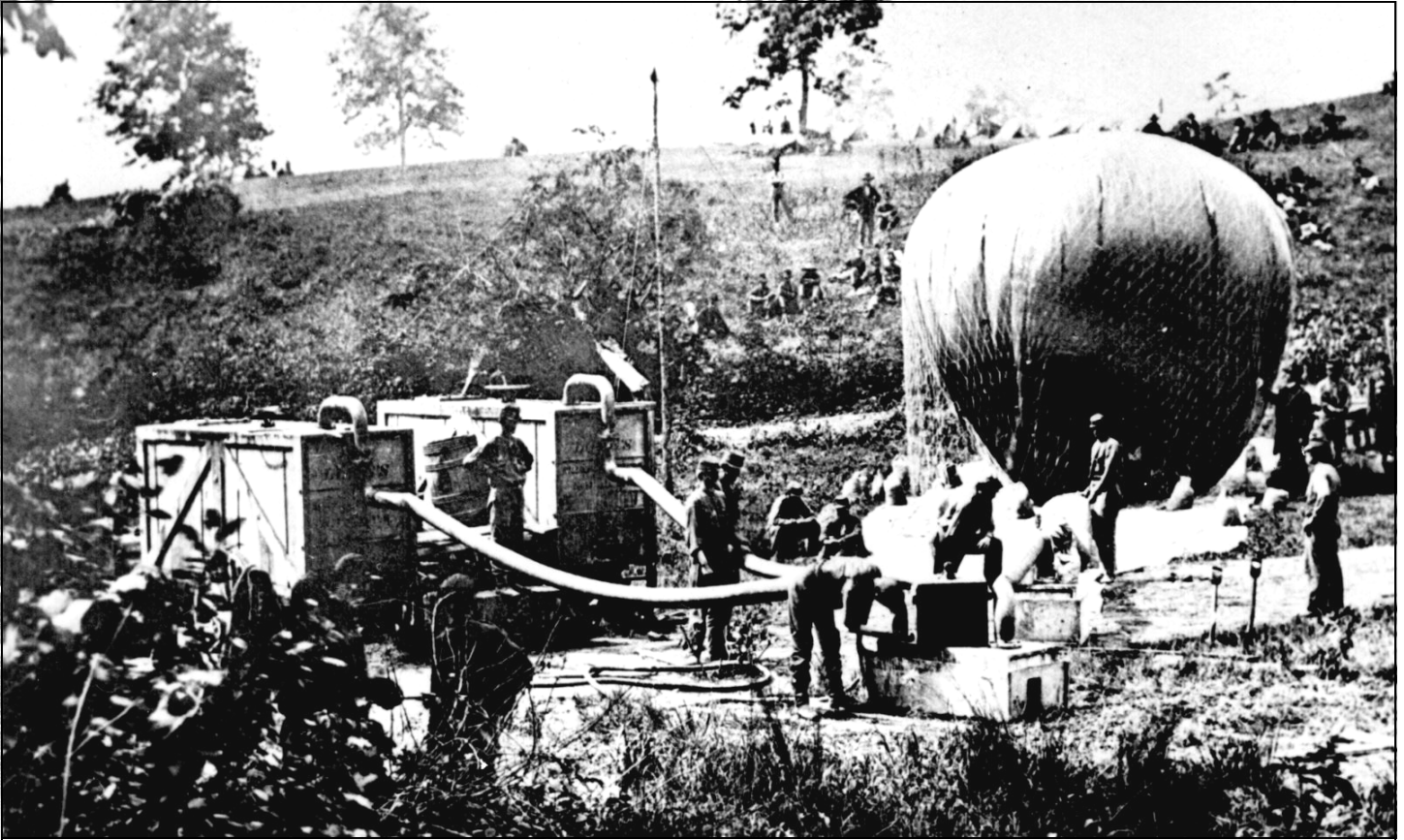


station weather announcers). Walt presented a lot of information about hazardous weather and how it occurs in nature. One interesting fact is that the geography of the United States makes it the world's worst tornado source – about 1200 per year. Of course

more and more are actually reported and captured by modern cameras – including cell-phones. We learned about the complex weather mechanisms that “stir up” tornados. There was also discussion about what to do in case of a tornado warning or an actual encounter with one.

Bill McKeown





*Intrepid being inflated at Battle of Fair Oaks, Va. in May of 1862. This process took approximately 3 hours to fill one balloon with Hydrogen. (Photo 1)*

## **Civil War Telegraph and the first Air Force**

By George Potter

We had an Air Force during the Civil War? This was an opportunity for me to combine both my radio history and aviation history in one article.

Currently, the Air & Space Museum in Washington, DC is in the process of acquiring land at Fair Oaks, VA, where the first aerial observation balloon was launched in May of 1862 during the Civil War. This is significant as it also relates to our first Air Force, first Army Balloon Corp, first use of newly designed light weight telegraph wire and the first use of telegraph from an observation balloon.

Professor Thaddeus S.C. Lowe won a contract with the government after a demonstration for President Lincoln of telegraph from a balloon. The Union Army purchased 7 large and small balloons, 12 field gas generators along with a flat topped balloon barge (first aircraft carrier!) from Lowe. Thaddeus Lowe

became a Chief Aeronaut for the Balloon Corps and a Mr. Park Spring became the Chief Telegrapher for the Signal Corp.

The Union balloon Intrepid would climb to a 1,000 ft. and the Confederate balloon Gazelle to a height of 500 ft. Yes, the Confederate states utilized two balloons. The Union Balloon Corps did over 3,000 launches from 1861 to 1863.

Communications came in the form of telegraph, signal flags, flames and streamers attached to balls. On occasion an Aeronaut would shimmy down the tether line and run to a signal station and send the message. Movement of a balloon with troops was a chore, due to Hydrogen generators, horse & mule teams but, improved with time. You would think that you could easily shoot down a balloon, but there's no record of anyone being hit, nor a balloon coming down from fire. It was known that Confederates tried hitting balloons with cannon shot and toward the end of the war rifling improved, but from a mile away and 1,000 ft. up





accuracy wasn't to be had.

Balloons were first used in 1794 with the French 1st Balloon Co. and communications were by colored flags and flames. The Army Balloon Corp was disbanded in 1863 after Thaddeus Lowe became very sick with malaria.

The intelligence gathered by balloon observations was valuable to both Union and Confederate generals and the Battle of Fair Oaks proved it.

If you are in the vicinity of the Genesee County Village & Museum, Southwest of Rochester, NY., go by and visit the site. They have an exact replica of the balloon Intrepid that is operational.

Photo credits: National Archives

*The Intrepid being prepared for launch, with telegraph gear on board with observers (Battle of Fair Oaks)  
(Photo 2)*

## Mystery Objects from the Jan/Feb Meetings

January: Mike presented a challenge to us in recognizing or correctly guessing the function of a "mystery object". This is to be an ongoing game activity for our meetings - titled "What is it, and What Does it Do?". The plan is to accept guesses and answers at the following meeting, by which time the

exact answer will probably be known. This time, he showed us what appeared to be tools with arrays of pins matching 7 and 9 pin tube bases. Members were invited to bring in their "mystery" items, even without knowing the answer.

February: Mike discussed our previous challenge in recognizing or correctly guessing the function of a "mystery object". The

consensus was that the pins on the devices might be used to clean tube sockets. A new mystery object was passed around the room for everyone to guess its application. The object has the same form as an octal-based glass vacuum tube, but with only a coil inside. There were quick guesses that it is an oscillator coil (but why in a tube housing?).

By Bill McKeown

**January**



**February**



## 2013 MONTHLY MEETING PROGRAMS UPDATE

NOTE: Programs will be held at various locations in Irving, Texas. Make note of the location as they may change from time to time. Senter East, 228 Chamberlain St.; or Garden and Arts, 906 S Senter Rd. Maps are located on the WEB site, <<http://www.VRPS.org>>, *EVENTS* page. Programs start at 2pm. unless otherwise noted. Call us on the cell *tellie* if you get lost: 972-898-7251 or 972-742-8085.

### APRIL 20, Garden and Arts Building

The discussion theme for our April 20th VRPS meeting will be the Radio Museum website ( [www.radiomuseum.org](http://www.radiomuseum.org) ), which will be presented by VRPS member John Kusching and special guest Ernst Erb. Ernst is the founder and operator of the Radio Museum website. Based in Switzerland, the website has an enormous amount of data centered on antique radio's. Prior to creating the website, Ernst wrote the 456 page book called "Radios von gestern" (Radio's of yesteryear), followed by "Radiokatalog" Volume One and "Radiokatalog" Volume Two. The presentation will describe what is on the website, how the website operates and the many features built into the website. The presentation will conclude with Ernst giving a real time demonstration of various features of the website.

### MAY 18, Senter East Building Parking Lot

Tail Gate Swap Meet. 8am to Noon.

### JUNE 15, Senter East Building

In keeping with a restoration theme our own Mike McCarty will present our program. He will cover problems commonly encountered with dynamic speakers and minor repairs or selecting replacements. The program will include how to modify power supplies using the field coils of electrodynamic speakers, and how to select replacement output transformers.

### JULY 21, 2012 Senter East Building

Annual Repair session. Bring your troublesome radios and/or phonographs for our "experts" to give advice and help to get them working again. Test the tubes, if possible, before the meeting. 8am to Noon.

Programs are subject to change, contingent on scheduling conflicts. As always, your suggestions for programs/content are welcome. If the programs do not fit your needs and you want something different, let me know. I need volunteers to organize other programs, so consider presenting a program yourself.

Call me anytime or send me an email. **Mike Grimes 972-898-7251 (cell), or [K5MLG@verizon.net](mailto:K5MLG@verizon.net).**

## One of the Funnier Items that Sold at the Auction



A Red Radio



## Photos from the Spring Auction



Early birds setting up



Members inspecting wares



The auction in full swing



Randy James demonstrating boombox



# SOUND WAVES

## April Fool Section

"I am often asked how radio works. Well, you see, wire telegraphy is like a very long cat. You yank his tail in New York and he meows in Los Angeles. Do you understand this? Now, radio is exactly the same, except that there is no cat."

Attributed to Albert Einstein

Q: How many radio astronomers does it take to change a light bulb?

A: None. They are not interested in that short wave stuff.

### Coming Soon: APRIL 20, Garden and Arts Building

The Radio Museum website <<http://www.radiomuseum.org/>> is a very popular Antique Radio website, with a typical day having 1000 Radio Museum members and 30,000 guests visiting the site. John Kusching will be giving our presentation describing the purpose of the website, how the site operates and also discussing the many features built into the website that can be very useful to radio restoration and collecting. See details, page 6.

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