

# SOUND WAVES

VRPS Fall 2013

## FROM THE PRESIDENT



Time is truly the only thing that really flies! When last we saw each other in this column, I told you Beverly and I would be taking the biggest part of the summer off to do a little traveling. Well, the biggest part of summer has come and gone, and yep, we are finally home. Back to the heat of Texas...which I did not miss. We have great memories and pictures of our vacation to the Midwest and Northeast part of this great country. I can assure you that, if nothing else, we have no shortage of corn or soy beans this year. Everywhere we went, we were in awe of field after field of green crops. Nice! Back to the real purpose of our trip (besides getting away from the heat), we had a great time in the

Chicago area participating in the Antique Radio Club of Illinois Radiofest. A little rain on Friday was the only spoiler for the flea market, but that was a minor inconvenience. The auction, contest display, many technical sessions, and a great banquet entertainment by Jim Wades discussing the telegraph in recent major big screen adventures highlighted Radiofest. Next we criss-crossed the states, making our way slowly from one antique mall to another until arriving in Rochester, NY, for the annual AWA convention, highlighted by the grand opening of their new museum. I was disappointed to see that only the first stage of the museum had been completed, but as you can imagine, money and volunteers are in short supply in New York, as well as other parts of the country. The good news is that there is a lot of room in the building to expand the displays...and they have lots of stuff waiting to be displayed. One thing I did notice that was common to both radio meets was the tremendous participation in their contests. I would strongly encourage each of you to look at our contest categories and brush off one of the sleepers on your shelf to display. It would be great to see a room full of showpieces at OUR convention!! It was good to see VRPS well represented at both the ARCI (Jim and Julie Collins, Randy and Jeannine James, Frank and Mary Rasada) and AWA (Tom and Barbara Burgess, Bob Voss, and Frank and Mary Rasada) meets. Between my wife and me, we helped the economy at just about every stop! The rented vehicle we were in was fully packed when we finally arrived back in Granbury. Boy, it was fun, but it surely is good to sleep in my own bed again. We now turn our attention to our own upcoming annual convention. We will be celebrating 39 years as an organization. That in itself is an accomplishment to be proud of. More information about the November event is elsewhere in this issue. Make your reservations early and see you there.

—Jim



## NOTES FROM THE AUGUST 17, 2013 MEETING

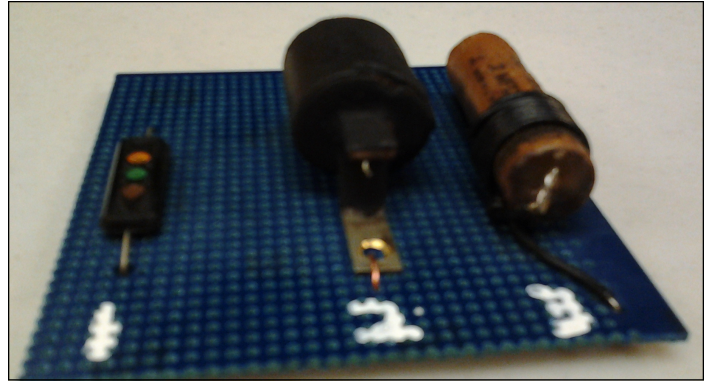
V.P. Randy James conducted the meeting, starting with a call for members to stand and tell us their names and their city of residence. He reminded us that our summer swap meet is to be held in September instead of the (usually) hotter August. Also, our annual November convention in Mesquite is going to be about a week earlier than usual – Nov. 15, 16 and 17. Randy mentioned Jim Sargent's upcoming two-day auction in Fort Smith, Arkansas, September 27-28 and another on October 26, 2013 in Garland, Texas. Kenny Black informed us of the passing of one of our members - Larry Penland. Kenny said that he will bring some of Larry's items to the September swap meet. Mike McCarty talked about a really special "tough nut" problem that he solved and promised to tell us about it in our Soundwaves. This triggered some discussion about having a training meeting for those new to troubleshooting radios or who want to learn more about it. Mike Grimes suggested that the book "Fixing Up Nice Old Radios", by Ed Romney, is a really good beginner's book. Another one is "Practical Radio" by Ray Bintliff, who has written many articles for A.R.C. (Antique Radio Classified). Program Director Mike Grimes opened up the meeting topic – a show-and-tell for "Shelf Queens". First, he handed out a group of 3 "Mystery Items" to be passed around during the meeting so members could try to identify them. There were quite a few shelf queens brought by members and displayed on tables for discussion.

First, a Marco Champ brand was shown. It could not be

identified, so no repair information could be had. Next, Billy Smith showed a pre-war battery only portable – with battery. This radio was one having a fabric covering over its wooden case. Ron Daniel showed three cathedrals and his neon sign transformer that he used to salvage the field coil in one of the speakers. He discussed the process of arcing and re-connecting the open spot in the coil, stressing that it is important to not overdo it. He sent the speaker off for re-coning and it still worked when he got it back. Ron showed a couple of cathedral cabinets that he restored. One required re-veneering over the top. The appearance of these radios illustrates how rewarding our efforts can be. Randy James showed his Crosley rep-wood Buddy Boy. It worked as he found it, without any re-building. But he has a schematic showing the radio to be a 7-tube radio, while it really has only 6. There is an extra blank tube socket hole in the chassis, but the radio plays fine with its six tubes! Members speculated that Crosley made a production change using the same physical chassis. It looks like Randy may have to trace the wiring to solve the mystery. Richard Shanks showed and demonstrated a nice-sounding early (1963) Zenith portable stereo record player. The player has an 8" built-in speaker and came with two external speakers, driven by a 4-tube 15 Watt push-pull amp. An important feature is a floating cartridge with only 2 grams tracking force! Bret Frohwein showed his Philco 38-12 white Plaskon radio. It had only one bad Bakelite block. It has a 5 1/2 inch speaker and may be Philco's first plastic radio (?). It seems rare. Pat Jankowiak showed us a very early frequency counter having vertical

arrays of neon lamps for each digit displayed – from about 1960. It is very big and heavy. He thinks it was used for scintillation counting for nuclear work. The author showed his model 7H820 Zenith AM-FM-FM radio, which has both the present and original FM bands. The original band was centered around 45 MHz. The back of the radio has a sticker showing it to be licensed by Armstrong. This feature is what makes the radio a nice collectible, but it has not been restored because there are no broadcast signals to receive. (One member suggested making a down-converter to shift the modern band to a useable signal). Joe Strickland showed an RCA chassis having push-pull 6F6's and a separate power supply. This radio, from the late '40's, has a 3-gang tuning cap. and FM reception. One of our members showed a Philco model 26 chassis having two 24's and a pair of 45's in its tube lineup. Lastly, Ed Janssen showed an ACROTONE TRUE TEST cathedral style radio, by Sterling Manufacturing Co. in Ohio. It was made in 4 and 5 tube versions, according to an item in a 1986 A.R.C. publication.

capacitor; one looked like an elongated mica capacitor - but was a resistor; and one was a capacitor with a coil wrapped around one end. An earlier mystery item – a coil inside a glass tube envelope – was finally identified as a hermetically-sealed oscillator coil. Dale Allen did some research with no luck, but a friend in California identified it as a part used in a 1939

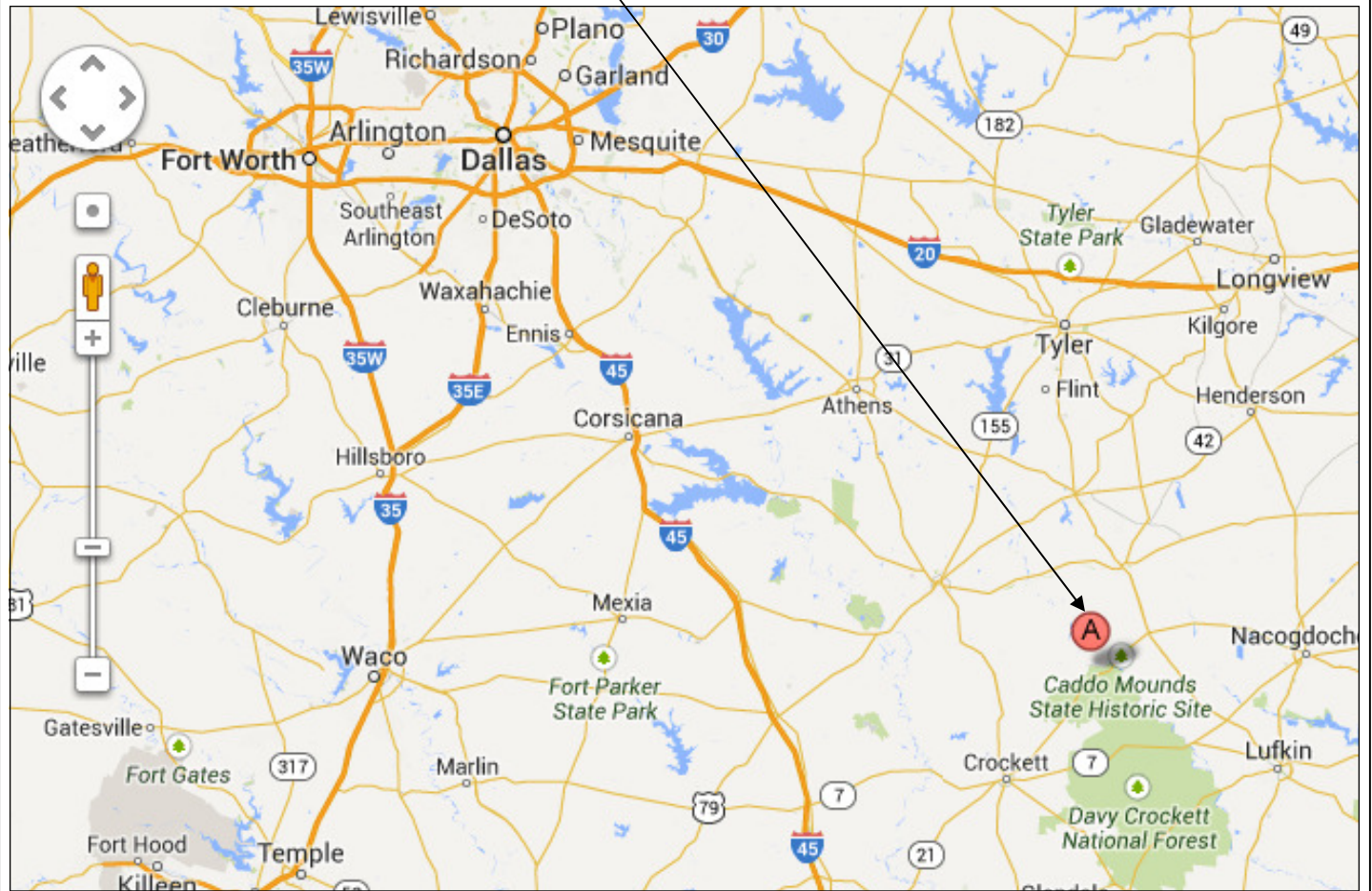


Mike Grimes asked the group if any one person could identify all three of the Mystery Items. But only as a group could we identify all three of them. One was a coil that looked like a

Chevrolet radio.

It would be interesting to see the restored and working "shelf queens" again, at future show-and-tell programs.

## MAP OF CECIL AND FRAN MILES VACINITY @ 23253 STATE HWY 21 EAST, GRAPELAND, TX 75844



## Radio Detective Mysteries:

### *The Case of the Confusing Console (Solution)*

By Mike McCarty



In the previous article, we found out about a Telefunken console which would oscillate loudly when the volume control was advanced more than about one third of the way. Investigations showed that the problem was confined to two tubes, comprising three active elements, viz. the first audio amplifier, the second audio amplifier, and the concertina style phase splitter. The errant signal had been traced from the grid of the first audio amplifier to the cathode of the phase splitter, but no means of the feedback necessary for oscillations had been found. In an effort to ascertain the cause of the feedback, both the outer terminals of the volume control had been shorted to ground and verified to be signal free, yet a signal was coming out of the slider terminal. Volume controls are passive components, that is, they do not generate signals, they merely modify and pass along signals already present. Had the laws of physics been overturned?

I sat back a moment in astonishment. How on Earth could a volume control with both outer terminals verified grounded emit a signal out of its center terminal? I felt my sanity draining away. It defied logic!

Or did it? I shook myself, and let reason regain control. If the signal was coming out of that volume

control, then somehow it got in, even though it had to come from a tube more than ten inches away. I just had to figure out how.

I inspected the volume control carefully, from all sides. There on the back, difficult to see and heretofore unnoticed, was another terminal. This volume control had a loudness tap. It had a small value capacitor connected, as usual. Those caps normally go to ground, sometimes through a resistor, or sometimes through a "tone control", and provide the auditory illusion of more bass. Could the signal be getting in that way?

I unsoldered the capacitor from the loudness tap, and gave the set a try. Normal behavior. I began to feel my confidence return. The other lead of the capacitor went through a hole in a brace to a terminal strip. It's possible that the signal was being capacitively coupled into the body of the capacitor. To check that, I unsoldered the other lead. Still normal behavior. From there went a long wire over to the other side of the chassis to a complicated switch with multiple buttons and many parts mounted on it. Time to look at the schematic again.

This volume control has not one, but two tone control taps! One of them connects to a capacitor to ground through a resistor. The other goes to a complicated tone control circuit, including an "automatic tone control" tube on a little sub assembly with another couple of pushbutton switches. Hmm. Tracing that out would take a lot of time. I decided to go back to the cathode circuitry of the phase splitter. This one is "bootstrapped", that is, the grid leak connects to a tap in the cathode circuitry to boost the effective input impedance, using some feedback from the cathode to the grid circuitry.

Connected to there is a 500K potentiometer that goes to ground via a witch marked "Oa". Two of the pot's terminals are connected to that switch and either the wiper or one of the outer terminals of the pot gets grounded. If that switch were open, then one of the outer terminals would be connected to

*Continued on page 7*



## A Texas legend goes up in smoke

By George Potter

History went up in smoke last October when *Big Tex* at the State Fair of Texas, experienced an electrical short and was in full blaze moments later. *Big Tex*, the 52 foot statue has greeted fairgoers since 1952.

The Dallas fire Department got there quickly, but unfortunately by then, *Big Tex* was fully engulfed in flames and pretty well gone, short of structural remains, his hands and Texas size belt buckle. Many folks that attended the state fair went first to *Big Tex*, not only to see that towering deep voiced cowboy, but to look up and wonder where his voice came from. One little boy next to me said, "maybe it was an elf down near his cowboy boots that was doing the talking". Well, close but not quite. But it

sounded logical! Diagonally across from *Big Tex* is the famous State Fair corny dog concessions, where you can chomp down on a corny dog and listen to him talk.

Bill Bragg and I had been right in front of *Big Tex* less than a week before getting our photo taken. Bill is towering over me at 6ft + and is wearing a silver dollar belt buckle bigger than a dinner plate!

Some of you who read this article will ask who is Bill Bragg? Bill goes back quite a ways with VRPS and radio collecting. He was an engineer with local channel 8 News many years ago and was the original founder of the Texas Broadcast Museum in Dallas and Irving.

All of us have heard Bill on TV every year about the time of The State Fair of Texas in September and

October. Why?..... because he is also known as the voice of *Big Tex*. Bill became the voice of *Big Tex* the following season after Jim Lowe passed away, who had been the previous voice of *Big Tex* for many years.



Bill was housed in an Air Stream trailer about 100-150 ft. from *Big Tex*, where he can see both visually and on a video monitor. He broadcasts every few minutes and adds in information and advertising too. Judy and I went to the front of the Air Stream trailer and shortly Bill uncoils himself and comes out stretching. He had a little break time to come out and pose for the photos you see in this article.

In January of this year, State Fair officials stated that the public could also donate to *Big Tex's* rebuilding if they so desired. This came after officials received a lot of phone calls inquiring about the rebuilding with offers to help out. Over 63 years after Sculptor Jack Bridges created the statue, there was little to be done each year to *Big Tex* other than cosmetic touch up by artist Jer Giles of Lancaster, Texas and new Lee jeans each year. But I'm sure new digital electronics and fire sup-

pression gear will be on top of the agenda and of course a new shirt and Lee jeans! Officials have said *Big Tex* will be ready in time for the 2013 State Fair of Texas in September and will no doubt be foremost and center stage for everyone.

Since I started writing this article, a turn of events has occurred. State Fair of Texas officials have decided to not renew an annual contract with Bill Bragg. For over 11 years Bill has been the voice of *Big Tex* and had a following of many people attending the fair including myself. In several articles that have recently been published in the Dallas Morning News, it stated the reason for not renewing Bill's contract was appearances he made outside of Fair Park, which were stated in the contract. But each time Bill was to make an appearance he asked and received approval from officials to do so. Response to this came quickly with the public and it was in defense of Bill. So for this year's State Fair there may be just a recorded voice unless officials do otherwise.





Bill is very disappointed with the situation of which he should be, but I will remember him as "the" voice of *Big Tex* forever. Thank you for the many years you have invested for folks at the State Fair Bill.

**WFAA.com** channel 8 for donation website

**Article:** Dallas Morning News on artist for Big Tex

**Photo 1** - Bill Bragg uncoiling from his *Air Stream* trailer at Fair Park

**Photo 2** - Bill Bragg and George Potter in front of Big Tex

**Photo 3** - Bill's plate size silver dollar belt buckle

### ***Radio Detective Mysteries (continued from page 4)***

another complicated tone control feedback network. Could this be the path? I located the pot on the chassis. It was marked "Treble".

I unsoldered all of the wires on the terminals of the Treble pot, and measured their resistances to ground; they were infinite. One of them should have been zero ohms. I traced the wires, and found that the one going to terminal 3 of the switch portion Oa had fatigued and broken, and the broken end was about 1/8 inch away from a terminal. By careful wire tracing, I verified that this was, indeed, the terminal on that horribly complicated switch where it was intended to connect. I prepped the wire, soldered it to the terminal, reconnected the Treble pot, and turned on the set.

Eureka! The set now behaves normally!

Either the wiper or the outer terminal of this pot is supposed to be grounded. Since this was not the case, the signal path direction got reversed, and instead of signals going from the volume control to ground via the tone control circuitry, signals were going out of the tone control circuitry, and thence to the volume control and entering it via one of the loudness taps. That's a bit of a simplification, since actually the "upper" loudness tap is indeed intended to be an input to the volume control, where extra treble gets in instead of going out, but the signal path at the Treble pot is supposed to be from the grid of the phase splitter to ground with feedback from the cathode, and instead it went on through another network into the loudness tap, where it had no business being. So, for just this one portion of the tone control network, the signal path was reversed. Also, in the sense of signals going from output to input, the signal path was reversed.

The laws of physics have not been overturned, and logic prevails!

QED

*Note from the editor: Send in your own Radio Detective Mysteries to mcaruth@att.net*

# SOUND WAVES

## MONTHLY MEETING PROGRAMS 2013

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.

OCTOBER 19, SENTER EAST BUILDING — World wide Broadcast Station QSLs, EKKO stamps, or other verification of radio reception has long been a hobby in itself. Bring your collection or items to share and discuss.

**\*\*NOVEMBER 2, (9 AM) CECIL AND FRAN MILES 23253 STATE HWY 21 EAST, GRAPELAND, TX 75844** — Please join us for a joint VPRS/HVRA Swapmeet and BBQ (\$10 donation) at the Eclectic Museum owned by Cecil and Fran Miles. We did this a few years ago and it was a great success. The hospitality was super and so was the trading. Make plans to attend. Bring swap items, lawn chairs, insect repellent, and cameras. Also, so we can get a head count for BBQ ordering, please email or call Jim Sargent if you plan to attend. JIM SARGENT (972) 742-8085 BSARGENT@SWBELL.NET *See map on Page 3*.

NOVEMBER 15-17, MESQUITE CONVENTION: HAMPTON INN — Annual Convention. Come join us for our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Auctions, flea market, and banquet. See detail of Convention coming soon.

DECEMBER 7, GARDEN AND ARTS BUILDING — Annual Christmas Party starts at 6 P.M. Bring a covered dish

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and something to "Show and Tell." Meat and beverages will be provided. Silent Auction items will be welcome.

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 Mike Grimes know. VRPS needs volunteers to organize other programs, so consider presenting a program yourself. Call Mike Grimes anytime or send him an email. Mike Grimes 972-898-7251 (cell), or K5MLG@verizon.net.

Have something you want to sell or are you looking for a certain radio or component? Check on the VRPS Web Site under Classifieds: <http://www.vrps.org/Classified.html>