SoundWaves

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VRPS Winter 2021

From the President

In an earlier edition of this oracle, I referred to this year and the pandemic as a "nightmare". Probably not the best choice of words…after all, I have been told often how we handle adversity is what builds character. I believe that, overall, we have stood strong in the face of adversity this year. Obviously, anyone could come up with examples of failures and missteps, but we are gonna come out the other end of this virus thingie better for the wear. Least ways, that is how I see it from Granbury.

Now club business…It looks like we will be doing (the city of Irving is not opening up our meeting rooms till later in the year) Zoom/virtual meetings for the foreseeable future; that means for at least 3 months…maybe/probably more. That being said, the challenge will be for us, as an organization, to continue to provide lively, entertaining, and informative topics to keep the crowds growing. As you might expect, we actually have better attendance at Zoom meetings than we typically have at live meetings…but that seems reasonable from a couple of angles. First, we have a lot of out of town/state folks join Zoom. I see a lot of familiar faces from live meetings also join via Zoom…but not everyone. Second, look at the savings in drive time and gas, not to mention the overall convenience. I would ask you to carve out an hour or two on a Saturday morning (typically the third) to participate. As a reminder, if you are unable to make the Zoom meeting, it is fully recorded and you can watch on our website at your own leisure. At some point during our Zoom sessions, I would like to have a virtual showing of member's collections. Some will choose not to participate showing what is behind door number 3, but I believe it will be a great opportunity to see some really fine collections.

Your directors will be meeting (probably virtually) in January to discuss 2021 activities and what we anticipate will be our annual convention in Plano. If you have a suggestion, feel free to contact me, and I will add it to the agenda.
Until the next time, as the old saying goes…I will see ya when I see ya.

--Jim

Notes from the Oct 31, 2020 Meeting

These notes were drawn from our ZOOM club meeting video, which can be viewed in its entirety by accessing the "'Events" posting on our club website. If you have computer access, you may want to augment these notes by viewing the meeting and getting a chance as well to see some of your friends. Also, earlier ZOOM meetings can be watched by accessing the club website. A special advantage of the ZOOM meetings is that you can connect some names to faces for members that live farther away or can't actually attend meetings. This meeting went more smoothly, now that most "attendees" have become accustomed to how ZOOM meetings work.

Mike Grimes started the meeting, giving us more history about his 1926 "David Grimes Own" kit radio restoration. As with many early battery-powered sets, the cabinet has no space for all the required batteries, and instead has a bunch of wires hanging out, to be hooked up to all of them. Mike's "slide show" presented a picture of the required 8 wires coming out from under the cabinet. He said that there are 8 connections and 6 different voltages required. The voltage connections included: B+135; B+90V; B+22V; C-4.5V; C-9V; and A+B-C+. His desire was to have power supplies inside the radio in space below the chassis. He and Dave Seymour worked together to design two modules (a single module would be too large to fit). One module provides all the "B" and "C" voltages and the other module provides the "A", or filament, 5 volt power. This power supply is designed around a 12 volt center tapped filament transformer and an LM317 solid state voltage regulator. The other supply uses a small transformer that Mike had, and it supplies about 135 AC to a bridge rectifier. The schematics for the two supplies are shown and are available from the ZOOM video. Mike showed the two small modules installed in his radio. He commented that he still needs to "tidy it up", as he didn't have time before our meeting took place.

Club president Jim Sargent, who posts many of his antique radio auctions on-line, offered advice about on-line bidding, in response to questions from several members. He recommends starting early by getting on-line, viewing items and then deciding which items you may want to bid on. This prepares you for the actual live auction. He also advised us to bid up-front (on line) and bid as high as you are willing to pay for an item. He reminded us that our bids must be made in defined minimum increments and will not be acknowledged if they are less. This saves time. The increments are: $5, initially, and when the bidding exceeds $100, $10 and then over $200 $20 and so-on. Last-seconds bidding will not work (called sniping) because any bid placed in the last 10 seconds will cause 2 minutes to be added to the deadline. The process repeats, if necessary. (This is called a "soft ending" in some auctions). Jim said that he would be happy to provide more information on an item, such as its condition and possibly a demonstration, if you call him. Charlie Wright noted that some auctions let you view several items ahead, during the real-time auction.
The problem of shipping an auction item was discussed. Jim uses the assistance on Randy James, and he or Jim may be called to arrange for help in both packing and shipping. Jerry Sirkin, in the Houston area, said that he and a couple of others can help, and at times drive up to the Dallas area, hauling items for members.

Dave Seymour presented a "slide show" about his recently acquired ca. 1922 Clapp-Eastham model R-4 one-tube regenerative set, which he acquired from one of Jim Sargent's auctions. The company was founded in 1908 and made early wireless and X-ray equipment. Radak is a made-up name from that of Rabbi David Kimhi. Dave said that this is his second variometer-type set, Instead of the variometer being used for regeneration control, it uses the variable condenser, while the variometer is used for tuning. He discussed the restoration of one of the brass dials, for which he had to use a sharp object to scrape out the old white filling and then re-fill it. He finally used the fill-and-wipe technique. One of the reduction drives wasn't working because a spring washer had lost its tension. He was able to disassemble it and repair it, using some help from Larry Lindsey with the washer problem. Another problem was the 3-cell "A" battery. There was no holder, but provisions for a long 3-cell battery like the type 232, made by Burgess. Dave found a source for a replica label and made a case from a paper towel roll. The 1-1/2 volt cells manufactured for the original Burgess battery were about 1/4 inch longer that today's "D" cells, so he had to make a spacer that allows use of modern ones. The spacer was made to conduct power from the top cell

Notes from the Oct 31, 2020 Meeting (cont.)

using a screw head to emulate the + end contact. Jim Sargent commented that the R-4's were all individually hand-made by a small group of people, explaining why they differ from each other.

Dave Seymour is doing research for a program involving the history and the characteristics of the type 01A vacuum tube. It is still a work in progress, but he showed us and discussed tube rejuvenators. He explained that the tubes were made to exhibit higher emission by including some of the metal Thorium in the Tungsten filament. The Thorium is depleted from the surface of the filament through use of the tube. By heating the filament to a high temperature, some Thorium is brought to the surface again. Dave displayed a couple of his rejuvenators, a Sterling 403 and a Jefferson. The Sterling has a selector for each of 3 levels of applied power and a meter that lets you check your progress in improving the tube. The Jefferson has no meter – making you put the tube in a radio to see the results. He mentioned another method of rejuvenation – applying minus 300 volts, which recovers some of the lost Thorium.

Author's Notes: I have a very early 1920's superhet radio that came installed with a special "universal" "C" battery having a common wire coming out of it and three thumb nuts to provide three negative bias voltages in increments of 1-1/2, 3 and 4-1/2 volts. Surprisingly all of the outputs measured to have the proper voltages, although they would not tolerate any loading. My R-4 has a tube/holder for 3 modern cells. It was nicely fashioned by someone from a section of a Mag-Lite flashlight handle (The remaining knurling and black anodize finish is a dead giveaway). If you view DeForest's patent for the triode vacuum tube, the schematic drawing shows three batteries, given identifiers referred to in the patent Description, as item "A" for the filament power; item "B" for the plate supply, and item "C" for the grid bias. These could have decided what our conventions are?

Bill McKeown

Notes from the Nov 21, 2020 Meeting

The video of this ZOOM club meeting is posted on our club website. Dave Seymour welcomed us to the meeting and, as is customary, asked everyone to state their names and where they live. There was a good turnout of about 34 attendees, many from "far-away places". One advantage of attending a ZOOM meeting from anywhere was obvious.

Club president Jim Sargent opened our meeting, introducing Amy Bishop, our guest presenter of the history of WRR radio broadcasting. The topic is in line with our theme for this year - "100 Years of Broadcasting". Jim learned about Amy from someone at the Kilgore radio broadcast museum. She is a marketing director for WRR FM radio and is also on-the-air at times. She reminded us that WRR is the oldest radio station in Texas and the second-oldest in the nation. She introduced John Slate, who is the head archivist with city of Dallas municipal archive, active in putting together a roving exhibit that is now at Dallas Love Field (in the baggage claim area). She then started a slide show depicting the history of WRR from its beginnings and in subsequent times until the present.

The show was put together by Amy and John and Kristi Nedderman. It covers significant events during the long history of the station. The station was officially licensed in 1921 at approximately the same time as KDKA in Pittsburg Pennsylvania. WRR began as the result of Henry "Dad" Garrett, the Police and Fire Signal Superintendant of Dallas, tinkering with radio. He decided it would be very

Notes from the Nov 21, 2020 Meeting (cont.)

useful for public-safety communications, and he convinced the city to purchase the needed equipment. The original station power was 50 watts. People began to build crystal sets so they could experience the new "magic" of radio. Fairly soon in the station's history, the public was listening to the police and fire department broadcasts too much, so the station split to two frequencies.

An interesting feature of the slide show was a dated sequence of important events for WRR, including news broadcasts and significant changes for WRR, or by major historical events such as wartime. Examples were Richard Nixon's resignation and the assassination of JFK. The slides showed a number of pictures of the early transmitting equipment and the locations of the station and transmitting tower. As time passed, the transmitter power and equipment were upgraded, providing more and more area of coverage. In 1925 the power went up to 500 watts at 1280 Kc and in 1931 to 1000 watts.

Jim Sargent mentioned a "moving day" when stations all over the country had to change transmitter frequencies in order to avoid interference from each other. On March 29, 1941, WRR moved to 1310, at 1000 watts power. Durwood Tucker had designed a new transmitter and facilities at White Rock lake. Jim also asked John if WRR ever gave out QSL cards. John said that the equivalent was letters and calls that came from people who were able to hear the station. Whenever they increased power, they would get more reports. During the '40's, WRR became affiliated with the Mutual Broadcasting network and went to 5000 watts. In 1948 they started broadcasting FM at 101,1 Mc – today's frequency. They are now at 100 Kw power and still adhering to the classical music format established by three influential Dallas women.

Eric Kirst, in one of the photos, spotted a record cutter for vinyl records, for transcription recording of broadcast material. This was at the time before magnetic tape recording. Jim related that Durwood Tucker, who had a massive WRR collection, spoke at one of our convention banquets sometime in the '70's, and also that Jim Lowe played snippets of audio for us at one of our banquets in the early to mid '90's. Jim (Sargent) asked George Potter to relate his experiences with WRR. George showed a WRR brochure from the Paradise Room atop the Greater

Notes from the Nov 21, 2020 Meeting (cont.)

Jefferson hotel in Dallas, where the WRR studios were located. The beautifully illustrated brochure provided a schedule of WRR broadcasts and a photo of their facilities. The photo included an image of the transmitter portion of the studio room. He showed his original Western Electric microphone with WRR inventory stamps and noted that Jim Sargent probably has the only other one. He restored his microphone to working condition and will install a cast aluminum WRR "flag" piece on it (when it arrives from California). John noted that one is missing from the archive collection and asked for help finding it. The exhibit will be located at Love Field up to the end of February and hopefully, after that, in the Dallas city hall lobby. And eventually at the hall of state at Fair Park.

Author's Note: Regarding QSL's, my first one-tube radio that I built ca.1947 would pick up only one station, but it would drive a speaker. The station was WHFB, a 1Kw station ½ mile away. That was my small move beyond just repairing radios.

Bill McKeown

Gone, but not forgotten

Ken Huckaby 1947-2020

Ken Huckaby, a relatively new member of VRPS, who worked our Annual Convention for several years, passed away in December from complications of covid19 virus. He had become an active, enthusiastic member and wanted to contribute to our club. He will be missed.

Celebrating 100 Years of Radio Broadcasting

- Video: celebrating 100 years of KDKA Radio -- https://www.radio.com/kdkaradio/news/local/video-celebrating-100-years-of-kdka-radio - three minute commemorative video from KDKA
- On the Air: The Story of Radio Broadcasting 1944 Westinghouse -- https://vimeo.com/330621958 - Interesting 22 minute film from Westinghouse about the beginning of broadcasting.
- History of Radio Broadcasting 'Hear and Now' 1958 National Association of Broadcasters - https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x5awmeq -- 18 minute video from a 1958 perspective.

Members & their Projects

Interview with Caitlyn Zaleski and her dad, member Walt Zaleski

Q1) Caitlyn, what radio project did you work on with your dad during the summer months?

A1) I received a Science Fair AM/FM Radio Kit as a gift from Santa that I wanted to put together and see if it would work.

Q2) What was the first thing you did before you started assembling the kit radio with your dad.

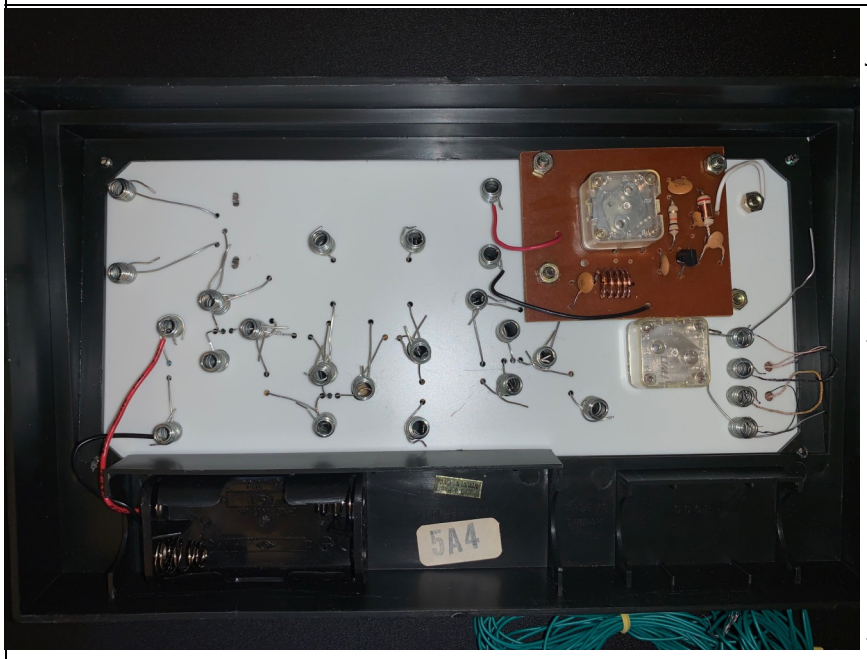
A2) The first thing we did was to read the instructions and check to make sure that all the transistors, resistors, capacitors and other parts were in the box and matched up to what was listed in the instructions.

Q3) What was fun about building the AM/FM radio kit?

A3) I was able to build my first radio without having to use a hot soldering gun. Those things look dangerous!

Q4) What did you notice about the parts of the radio compared to the radios that your dad collects from the 1930s and 1940s?

A4) My dad explained that the little transistors took the place of the tubes but the capacitors and resistors



just were a lot smaller.

Q5) How did you know what part to install in the AM/FM kit radio?

A5) We followed the instructions one step at a time then double checked our work by looking at what we wired into the chassis and how it compared to the pictures of the chassis in the instructions.

Q6) Were there any problems you discovered during building the kit?

A6) My dad and I found an error in the instructions about the type of capacitors that were being installed. The instructions said there were supposed to be three electrolytic capacitors but the circuit board and schematic only showed two. Luckily, the circuit board and schematic were correct since there were only two of those capacitors in the box.

Q7) Were you excited to test the kit radio after installing all the little parts?

A7) Yes, after we double checked our work one more time, I put two new double AA batteries and hooked up the earphone, then tried the FM first. I was surprised I could hear music stations playing but some seemed to overlap each other. Then we hooked up the antenna for the AM and picked up several stations.

Q8) Was there anything you did to help improve the kit radio's reception of stations?

A8) Yes, there was an option to add a ground wire and long antenna wire for AM instead of using the little antenna coil. We moved both wires around and the volume increased and I could hear more stations on AM.

Q9) What did you learn from building the kit radio with your dad?

A9) Double checking our work to make sure we didn't mess up was important because after the first few parts, the back of the chassis with wires we connected was getting confusing. Also, my dad taught me how to read the color rings on the resistors to figure out their value. Finally, I learned that radio signals were all around us and all we needed to do to hear them was to build a radio that could pick them up.

[Editor's Note: It's great to have young people interested in the hobby - Caitlyn has been attending the VRPS Convention since 2012 when she was three years old. We need to put Caitlyn on a huge billboard advertising for us..]

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