

The Alabama Historical Radio Society Newsletter



September 2014



NOTE FROM PRESIDENT TOM

Hello, All!

Wow! What a great couple of Saturday workdays we have had at the Shop! I have several pictures of more experienced "Radio-ologists" members mentoring newer members on how to fix old radios. There is someone at the Shop every Tuesday and Saturday to teach folks how to repair stuff.



Chris Story mentoring two new members



Dave Johnson mentoring member Dean Bonner



New Member, Don Letchman, learning from Dee Haynes and Chris Story

Marvin (Bill) Shepherd has completed the restoration of the Zenith Chairside radio donated to the Society earlier in the year. You have to see it up close to appreciate the effort that Marvin has put into this beauty. He restored the inside electronics and the cabinet.



Marvin with the Chairside before it is put together.



View of the Dial with glass open

The FADA 172 has been completed! It came in about a year ago with major issues. Someone had been working on it, and it was far from factory specs. It had a seven conductor resistor power cord, which had been partially by-passed by others, a dial light removed from the circuit (it had two dial lights originally) and other issues.

I replaced the power cord with a two conductor cloth cable (more in keeping with a 1930's power cord) and added a ballast tube to replace the electrical characteristics of the resistor cord. Finding the correct ballast tube was a real trick. Gene Samples had two universal ballast tubes, but they did not have continuity between some of the pins. Robert Frye had one in his magic box, and I used it to fix the power supply. I added another dial light, replaced nine capacitors, two tubes, the rectifier tube and the audio output tube. Along the way, I learned something from Dave Johnson about using our military tube checker.

After restoring the radio power circuit so I could turn it on and further trouble shoot it, I could not get the proper voltage out of the 25Z5 rectifier tube. I had checked this tube earlier, and it tested good. Dave put it on the tube checker and found that it had a short circuit in it. He used one of these tube testers while in the military and was very familiar with the proper way to check for shorts. He said to always check a tube for shorts before proceeding with the emission testing. I had not checked for shorts when I checked the rectifier tube, and I missed the short. We found a 25Z5 tube in our tube room, checked it and it was good; there were no shorts and good gain. Once in the radio, the voltage came up, and the radio played with low output (volume).

We checked the output tube, 43, and it had an intermittent short, so we replaced it. Now we have good output. The Shop antenna was hooked up and local AM stations came in great. On the shortwave band, the English version of Radio Havana was booming in. This is quite a nice radio and would have been highly valued in the late thirties. The cabinet was not perfect, but it is an old radio, so it should show some “old” on it. A little Old English helped some. The owner came in last Saturday to take the radio home and made a nice donation to the Society for the repair work.



FADA 172

We continue to receive donations. Dee and I recently picked up a truck and car load of miscellaneous radios, an SP-600 receiver, a BC-348 receiver, old military cases and equipment, a seven-foot-tall rack with several nice rack-mounted pieces of military equipment, ham antennas, old tubes, dozens of boxes of radio parts and dozens of old radio magazines. Dave Cisco was caught on camera going through the magazines. He found two magazines that we needed for the Library!



Dave Cisco looking for books

At Radio Class on September 6, we decided to let each student pick out a radio to restore. Mentoring will be offered to each class member to help them along with the restoration. Some already had radios at home to work on. That is fine and still allows them to receive help where needed. We intend to display the radios at this year's Christmas Party in December to be judged by those attending. A prize may be in order.



Student Dr. Robert Curry with his Class Project Radio

There will not be a Radio Class in October, mainly because of other things going on, such as the Helena Ham Fest and the Nashville Antique Radio Fall Event, both on the 11th of October. Robert is unavailable on October 4.

Several new shelves have been added at the Shop to accommodate the new museum quality radios we have received and the ones we are to receive in October. The new shelves will also allow the Shop and Museum Committees to rearrange the existing radios and add some freshness to the displays.



New shelves at the Shop

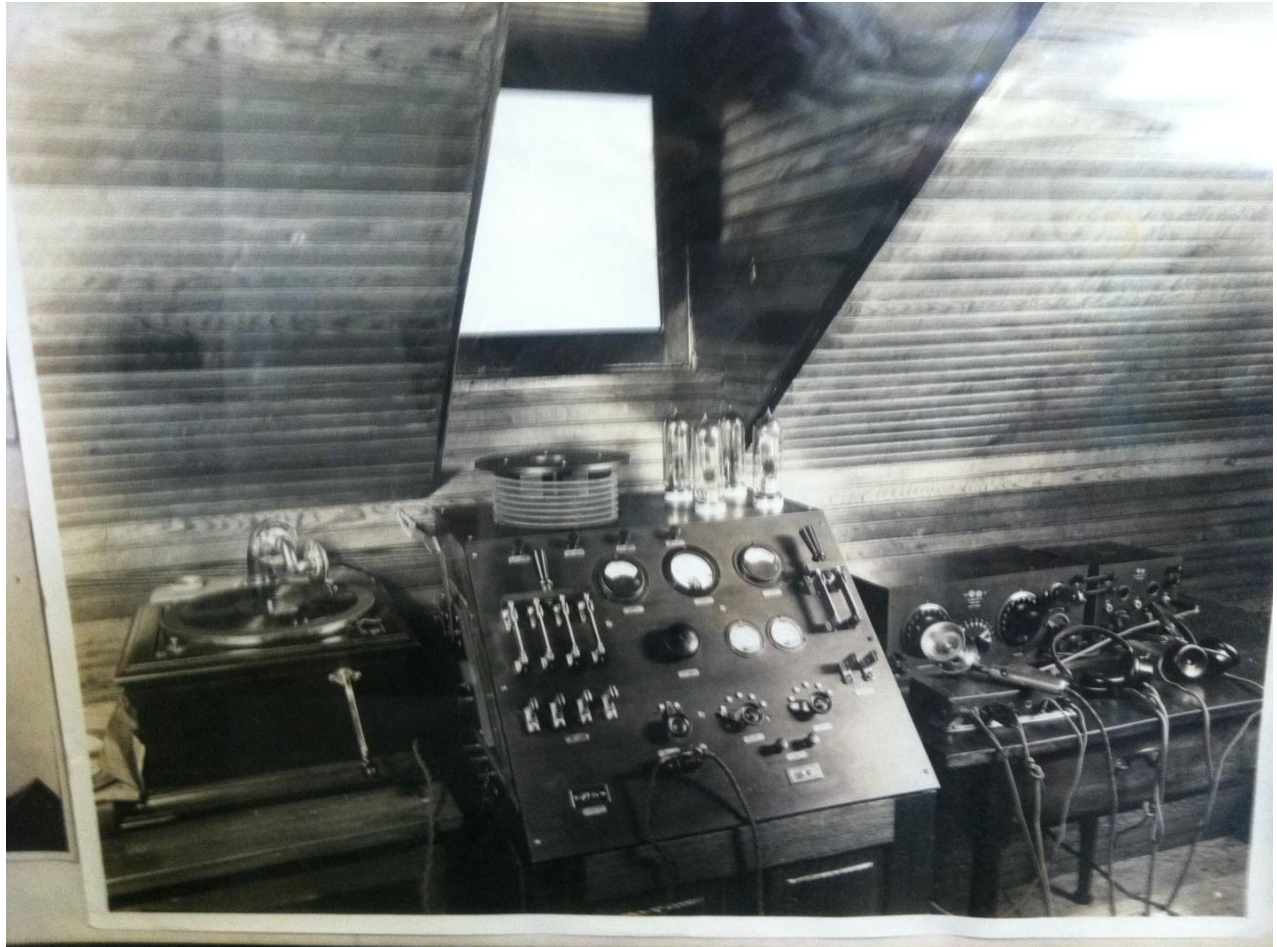


New Shelves



New Shelves

The Shop had some special visitors this month. Member Harry Butler and his wife brought along David and Vickie Creel, who are missionaries who travel the world setting up radio stations. David is the son of the late Reverend George Creel, who was an avid collector of old radios. Many of our older members will remember George from his visits to our shop in Huffman years ago. David recently held an estate sale which included these radios. Some fellow named Long bought most of them. David also brought us about a dozen framed, black and white pictures of old radio stations, ham radio stations and ads for old radios. Harry is writing a newspaper article about old radios and will include some of these pictures like the one below.



Old commercial broadcast station



Me, David Creel and Steven with a framed FADA ad donated to the Society

On September 9, Dave Cisco, Dee Haynes and I made a presentation to the Riverchase United Methodist Church Senior group. There were about thirty-five people there, and they listened well and asked lots of questions. Dee's old radio show review was the hit of the meeting. The lunch they served was outstanding! This group will tour our museum and shop on September 23. Come join us if you are in the area.



AHRS Historical Radio Presentation to Riverchase UMC

The Museum Collections Assistant at the Alabama State Department of Archives and History recently sent us some pictures to identify. One picture had a cylinder with coils of wire around it and a movable coil inside of it. One end of the coil had several mounting brackets. It had been labeled as a compass.

I sent out a request for information to our members on the web and within minutes, Donald Patterson responded that it was the tuner for a Radiola V radio. He sent a picture of it installed in a Radiola V. I received many more responses stating that it was a variometer or variable inductor. I even got the Wikipedia page for the variable inductor. Thanks to everyone who responded! I did not get a response from the State, so their e-mail went down or they are just too happy to thank us.

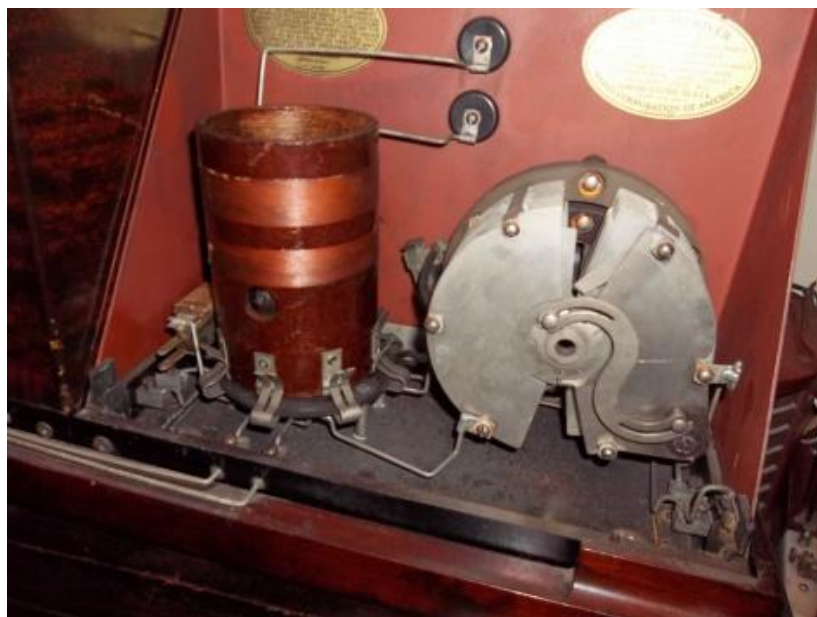


Mystery item from Alabama State Archives



Inside view of Mystery item

Donald Patterson sent the following picture:

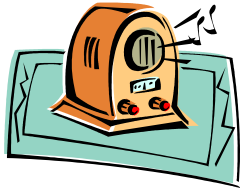


Our next Monday night meeting is on September 22 at the Shop in Birmingham, AL, beginning at 7 p.m. with a board meeting beginning at 6 p.m. There will be an interesting program lined up. We will continue to discuss ways to reduce our inventory. Please come enjoy some fellowship and help support your Society!

President Tom

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OLD TIME RADIO BITS

Hello Folks!

The crime anthology *Suspense* was not only one of the most popular shows on radio, but was also one of the longest running series. It was first broadcast on June 17, 1942, and last broadcast on June 30, 1962. There were 947 shows produced and all but 20 are known to exist today. Until the mid-1950's, it was a haven for movie stars who wanted to perform on the radio. Gary Grant was quoted in 1943 as saying, "If I ever do any more radio work, I want to do it on *Suspense*, where I get a good chance to act."

Suspense earned its name in that it kept the audience on the edge of their seats. However, the show allowed film actors to test their limits. Comedians were allowed to be serious actors – Jim and Marian Jordan, Fibber McGee and Molly, starred in an episode in which they were held captive by a killer. Bad guys were allowed to be good guys – Peter Lorre, who usually was cast as a villain, played the role of a gentleman. And, of course, many of the movies' good guys were allowed to be bad guys.

Obviously, a show that ran for so long had many memorable episodes. In fact it would be easy to do a monthly column on nothing more than notable *Suspense* shows. Undoubtedly, the most famous one starred Agnes Moorhead, Endora of the television show *Bewitched*, and was titled *Sorry, Wrong Number*. The show revolved around a telephone company malfunction and a killer for hire. It was rebroadcast many times during the run of the series and always drew many listeners. There is a link to the show below. Even the most casual OTR fan deserves to hear this show at least once.

However, my favorite *Suspense* show is *The Hitch-Hiker*, an intense story of a cross-country traveler who sees the same hitchhiker day after day. This episode stars Orson Welles and was written by Lucille Fletcher, the same author who wrote *Sorry, Wrong Number*. This episode may be my favorite if for no other reason than I have a soft spot for Orson Welles, a genius in stage, film and radio. Here are a few examples of his work:

- He was known for his role as Lamont Cranston in *The Shadow*;
- He directed and produced the radio drama *The War of the Worlds*

- He was the producer, director and lead actor in what is considered by many to be the best film of all time, *Citizen Kane*;
- He was the founder of the Mercury Theatre.

It is interesting to note that the aforementioned Agnes Moorhead was a member of the Mercury Theatre and was Lamont Cranston's "friend and companion, the lovely Margo Lane."

The 927 available *Suspense* episodes have been made available on archive.org by the Old Time Radio Researchers Group and can be found by clicking [here](#). However, for the two episodes mentioned herein just click on either of the links below to listen to the shows.

[Sorry, Wrong Number - May 25, 1943](#) (Complete with an actor's flub of his lines at the end of the show.)

[The Hitch-Hiker - September 2, 1942](#)

"Suspense, Colombia's parade of outstanding thrillers ... presented each week to bring you to the edge of your chair, to keep you in suspense."

Until we meet again in the theatre of the mind...

Larry Lokey

larry@otronmp3.com

[Website - otronmp3.com](http://Website-otronmp3.com)

MEETING TIMES

We meet every Saturday (unless a Holiday weekend) at 09:00 AM, at the one-story AHRS Shop at the corner of 8th Avenue North and 18th Street (1801 8th Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203). Use the rear (Southeast) entrance.

Also, we have opened the Shop on Tuesdays at 09:00 AM until around 11:30 AM when we go to Marilyn's Deli and Dog for lunch next door. Note that parking can be a problem on Tuesdays because it is a business day and the lot is usually filled, so you may have to find street parking occasionally.

We meet on the fourth Monday night of each month, too, at 7:00 PM. Please come join us!

FREE ELECTRONICS CLASSES

One more great benefit from becoming a member of AHRS--free Electronic classes!

Classes are taught the first Saturday of each month (except when something special is taking place, then we agree on what Saturday).

We start from the beginning Ohms Law, inductors, resistor and Capacitors color codes, as well as what each component does within the radio circuits. We also teach how to use test equipment used in the repairing of radio. We teach troubleshooting radio troubles, as well as how to read a radio diagram. There are coil winding classes, and one-on-one repair help.

Come join these classes.



DUES! DUES! DUES!

Membership dues are \$25 a year, payable beginning in January. If you have questions about your dues, you can contact Don Letchman at 205-967-8557. **Dues can be mailed to AHRS @ P.O. Box 131418, Birmingham AL 35213.**

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