

The Superflex



A Publication of the Alabama Historical Radio Society

May 2019

NOTE FROM PRESIDENT DAVE

Greetings to all!!

In the heading above, note the name of this newsletter is now “The Superflex”. This was the original name of the Society newsletter published by our founder Don Kresge. The letter was copied on a copier, folded and mailed by snail mail. This was a very labor intensive and expensive process. Wow, how things have changed for the better.

The first four months of 2019, our thirtieth year, have been very good for the Society. The big event in April, of course, was the annual Legends of Broadcast. This was our ninth Legends event and another good one. It was well attended and many interesting stories were shared with the group. Everyone there enjoyed the food and fellowship. I want to thank all members who helped in any way to make this event a huge success.

Thanks to Dee Haynes for presenting the program for the April business meeting. The videos on electromagnetism were very informative. The cartoon at the end brought many laughs. Attendance has been excellent and work in the shop is taking place on all work stations most every meeting. Because of the increased shop activity, some rules have been posted both in the shop and tube room. Please familiarize yourself with these rules as they are intended to make our shop run smoothly and more enjoyable for all members.

Joe Minor is bringing the class along very well and the time has come for the students to start applying what they have learned with hands experience in the shop on some of the radio brought in for repair.

As a new event the year, we are participating in the Shelby County Amateur Radio Club Hamfest on June 14 & 15 at the Helena Community Center, 100 Sports Complex Drive, Helena, Alabama 35080. Plans are underway for a display table and a sales table. We are not presenting a forum. We will publish more details as we get closer to the event.

We are planning another membership auction at the May business meeting, the fourth Monday night, May 23. There are two tables of items currently offered; hopefully more items will become available before the meeting night. Come to the shop and look the items over. These items are different from what we have sold at the last two auctions, but could be useful to many of you. All income from auctions goes into the general operating fund and allows the Society to further its mission. That’s all for now.

See you at the shop.

President Dave

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE SOCIETY

Legends of Broadcast

Submitted by Steven Westbrook

The 9th Annual Legends of Broadcast event was held at the AHRS Workshop on April 18. We had over 50 attendees, both Legends and Members.

After fellowship and a meal, provided by our next door neighbor Marilyn's Deli, the fun began.

Our journey into the eccentric, murky and mysterious workings of the broadcast industry was led by Jeff Tyson Nysewander aka "JT", an "on the air" personality and program director at numerous radio stations across the country. He provided a glimpse of the "real story" behind the curtain of the microphone. He told several tales including a fascinating story of locking himself on a balcony outside of the station on a cold and windy night with no way to get back to the control board before the record ran out. I understand "dead air" is **NOT** appreciated in the broadcast industry. The station manager was not happy with him that evening. He took other humorous tales of being or almost being fired - sometimes for cause and sometimes not.

Local Legend Don Mosley aka "Don Martin" told an equally "true life" story about life as a "Good Guy" at WSGN. He told of the perils of climbing up a ladder to the roof of the station to wake and retrieve the next "Good Guy" who was due on the air.

"Dollar Bill" Lawson entertained with many new stories of life with fellow radio personality Patti Wheeler at WZZK. All I can say about the wild, wacky, and wonderful stories about Patti Wheeler is to quote the great cowboy humorist Will Rogers who said: "Interesting if true—interesting anyway".

Many other Legends made humorous, intelligent and philosophical comments, including, Harry Butler, Fred Hunter, Ray Edwards, Bob Barry, Ray White and our own Ed Boutwell.

For those who missed the event, you can soon view the video on the AHRS website, as shot and edited by member Ken Smith.

All the attendees enjoyed themselves and the fellowship and promised to return next year with other broadcast friends.

Steven Westbrook, VP of AHRS



Jim Cawthon making a point with a guest while Celeste Cisco and Skip Leslie watch.



Member Skip Leslie and Legend Doug Brewer in the DJ Booth.



Legends Bob Barry and Ray White.



Legend Binnie Myles and Member Dee Haynes.



Member Ed Boutwell, Legend Jerry Levin and his wife Sis Levin.



Lunch with the Legends and Members.



Lunch with the Legends and Members.



Member & Legend Harry Butler comments on the proper way to announce a football game



Legends Fred Hunter and "Dollar Bill" Lawson discussing the finer points of bull riding.



Member Don Mosley introducing Legend Jeff Tyson Nysewander aka "JT"

AHRS Vacuum Tube Room Rules

Due to increased membership, shop activity and space constraints we are establishing some basic rules so we can all have equal access to tubes and do what we do – work on radios.

- 1. USE THE LOOSE TUBES IN THE TRAYS PRIOR TO USING THE ONES IN THE BOXES OR THE NEW TUBES.**
- 2. RETURN ALL TUBES TRAY TO THEIR CORRECT LOCATION WHEN FINISHED WITH A TRAY.**
- 3. TURN THE TUBE TESTER OFF WHEN YOU ARE FINISHED.**
- 4. IF YOU GET A TUBE, BUT DO NOT USE IT, PUT IT BACK IN THE SAME TRAY WHERE YOU GOT IT.**
- 5. DO NOT MIX TUBE TYPES IN THE TRAYS, UNLESS YOU FIND THEY ARE INVENTORIED THAT WAY.**
- 6. KEEP THE TUBE ROOM FLOOR CLEAR OF CLUDDER.**
- 7. IF YOU LEAVE A NEW DONATION OF TUBES IN THE TUBE ROOM, COMPLETE THE PROPER DONATION SLIP, PLACE A COPY IN THE DONATION BOOK AND LEAVE A COPY WITH THE DONATION.**
- 8. ALL TUBES REMOVED FROM THE TUBE ROOM MUST BE ACCOUNTED FOR.**

Officers of AHRS

First Phone's First Nights 1959

Submitted By M.D. Smith, IV WA4DXP



In 1959, I had a new FCC First Phone ticket that allowed me to work the midnight to dawn shift as a combo Dee Jay at WAAY Radio. I finished Grantham School of Electronics in mid-July and was working vacation shifts in August for night combo men or better announcers rotated to prime shifts.

It was just my third night running the “Fun Filled Family Five Dozen Hits format,” and I had barely learned where all the meter readings were that had to be taken, mastering wire copy, playing 45s, sticking to the format, inserting commercials and promos on just two PT-6 Magnecord decks. Only 2 tape decks kept me very busy during a 4 or 5 spot break. I knew where the plate switch was on the RCA 1KW transmitter and the meters to read and that was about all. That said, I was more comfortable on my third night shift. Without any warning about 2:00 a.m., the transmitter kicked off. That had never happened before. I quickly jumped up from the control room chair, through the door to the transmitter in that hot room. The RCA was still lit inside, so I hit the plate switch again to put in on. Immediately, it kicked off again. A couple more tries, and

same results.

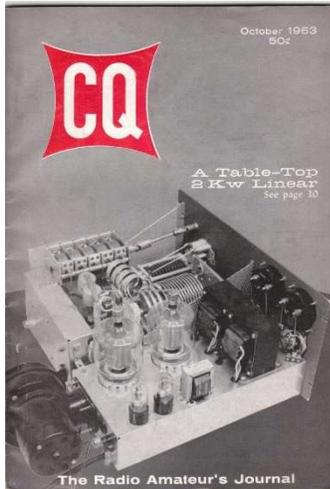
I did go around to the back and open the rear door to see if I saw any smoke or obvious damage and did not. I had learned schematics very well, and had built a number of hi-fi amplifier kits, and even a little 100 milliwatt AM transmitter back in DC at the Grantham school. But I had no idea how to trouble shoot a real and big kilowatt AM transmitter, which was running 500 watts low power directional at night. During the day, it fed a monster home brew 5,000-watt linear amplifier in a caged off area with either one or two monster 892R air cooled tubes inside.

But here I was, dead in the water with not a hint of an idea to get the transmitter back on the air. I hated to, but I called the Chief Engineer, Dick Essner, at home, woke him up and told him I could not get the transmitter back on the air. I tried a couple of things he suggested, but no go.

So, Dick arrived about 10 minutes later and I went with him to the transmitter. It was a very hot night and the transmitter room must have been in the high eighties, even at 2 am with the big ceiling exhaust fan sucking in air for ventilation. All the windows were open, and torn screens allowed all sorts of moths and other flying insects to swarm around inside the transmitter room.

I went with Dick who saw the RCA rig kick off again when the plate switch was thrown, and he opened the cabinet and began looking around. "Ah ha, look at that," he said, pointing to an area below the 8008 rectifier tubes, underneath where the pins were located above a steel shelf below that. At first, I didn't see anything and then he pointed closer to the gap between base pins and chassis ground. There was a large beetle, partially fried where he has sustained arching of the high voltage rectifiers to ground, thus kicking the rig off the air. He pulled out his pocket knife, and gingerly flicked the beetle into his hand to inspect it close. There was only about half the side of the beetle left, but it was still providing the short to ground of the high voltage.

That done, we closed it up, plate switch on, and it worked. I apologized profusely for having to get the Chief out of bed at 2 a.m. to come fix the rig, but I would never have spotted that bug that came in through one of the holes in the bottom of the cabinet. The vents on the back were covered in wire to prevent flying things from getting inside.



I loved the bright orange glow of those 4-400 tubes, and just a few years later after I got my ham license while in school at the University of Alabama, I built a linear amplifier using a pair of 4-400s and it was the Cover Story of CQ magazine in the October 1963 edition.

The linear I first built, was a swamped-grid input like my father's HT-32B used with a 50 ohm, non-reactive 100-watt resistor on the grid input, but it took off like a songbird on any band higher than 40 meters. I burned up so many parasitic resistors trying to get it to work, that I finally rebuilt it as a grounded grid input with filament chokes and it worked fine from then on. In hindsight, I should also have gotten a smaller and quieter blower than the 100 CMF squirrel-cage unit that was so loud, I didn't use the amp often except when I really needed it, but it did easily put out the legal limit with 3600 volts on the plates.

Obviously, I learned a lot more about the nuts and bolts of transmitting equipment after my first 1959 encounter with the kinds of "Bugs in the Transmitter" one might find while troubleshooting a rig. "De-bugging" a transmitter or amplifier can mean many things, as you can tell from this true story.

The Majestic, Acrylic, Frankenstein Radio

Submitted by John Frank Parker



The Majestic, Acrylic, Frankenstein Radio began life as a Majestic Radio Model 6T-120, broadcast band radio in the year of 1947. The radio was housed in an attractive wooden, table top cabinet. Who knows what journey the radio took during these past seventy two years, but along the journey, the attractive wooden cabinet traveled a separate path and was lost from the radio chassis. The chassis of the Majestic radio was found in inoperable condition and missing the three original knobs, (ON-Off-

VOLUME), (TONE), and (TUNING).

I acquired the radio chassis in the above mentioned condition. I cleaned some of the seventy-two year old dust and dirt from the chassis to make the next step more pleasant. I began to attempt to repair the radio to a working condition by checking the tubes, replacing the electrolytic capacitors, the paper capacitors, the power cord, and some wire. The speaker also needed some repair attention. The radio was brought back to a playing condition, picking up local AM Broadcast radio stations. However, still no cabinet to house the radio.

I was going to build a wooden cabinet but, decided to try to build a cabinet made of acrylic so that the chassis, tubes, and all parts of the radio could be viewed. A trip to LOWE'S and I had a sheet of Acrylic. After making some measurements, I designed what I thought would house the Majestic Radio. I also purchased some 1X2 poplar wood to build a frame. After several careful measurements, I drilled holes in the Acrylic and began assembling the wood frame and attaching the Acrylic top, bottom, front, back, and sides to the wood frame with screws. I



attached a carry handle to the top. I salvaged a loop antenna from an old RCA radio back and removed the wire loop and attached it to a piece of wood which I attached to the Acrylic back of the Majestic radio. That is why the RCA “Golden Throat” logo sticker is on the wood housing the loop antenna. New rubber feet were attached to the bottom of the Acrylic cabinet. By my count, some one-hundred thirty-four screws were used in this project.

The radio sounds good and my grandson says it looks neat in a dark room with the dial light and tubes glowing. My grandson will be getting this Majestic, Acrylic, Frankenstein, one of a kind, radio that I worked on for approximately two months.

THE MAYOR’S RADIO PROJECT

Submitted by the editor.



Dave Johnson and Frank Parker have been working hard on restoring a Zenith console. Right to left in the picture as the radio came into the shop are Dave Johnson, the Mayor of Mountain Brook, and Dave Cisco.

Dave Johnson went to work on the electronics and Frank Parker went to work on the cabinetry.

The electronics began right away to show big trouble. The output transformer and the field coil were bad. A second, identical radio was found in Georgia and Johnny Outland made the trip to pick up

the parts radio (and visit his sister).

The second unit was examined and the field coil and speaker were in good shape but, alas the audio output transformer was bad. An audio output transformer was ordered and work continued on the radio.



Back to Frank and the cabinetry. Frank set about restoring the woodwork using a “secret concoction” that, with Frank’s working over a series of Tuesdays, yielded a beautiful piece of cabinetry. Yep, that is green masking tape near the bottom of the cabinet.



Dave Johnson and I took a turn at the electronics one Saturday afternoon. The radio showed promise of working when the band switch was turned to auto tune (with the push buttons). It just refused to work with the normal manual tuning. The radio just did not match the schematic. Don Lechman and I took a look at the Rider information and sure enough there was a schematic for a radio – phono model that matched up with our console radio component wise. Checking the tubes, cleaning the controls, tracing out suspicious areas on the schematic were to no avail, until Dave turned the radio right side up and took a good look at the tuning capacitor passed through the metal chassis. At last, we had a working radio. Now for a bit of cleanup, and making permanent connection out of temporary ones, and cap replacement, and installing the blue tooth receiver, and marrying the whole system together, the radio will be ready

to deliver to the mayor. Kudo to Dave Johnson and Frank Parker in their endless labor on this project.

Rare Radio

Submitted by the editor.



Anybody remember this radio featured in the coverage of the April auction. (April Newsletter of the Alabama Historical Radio Society, April 2019). Expertly restored by Tom Hayes, let me present the Silvertone Coronet, from 1937. Silvertone apparently produced this radio to celebrate the coronation of King George VI of England. The Brits objected and only a very limited number were produced. Its cabinet is bakelite and somewhat fragile. Very few

remain in anything approaching good condition. Plastic Radio list its value at \$1700. What was considered something of an ugly duckling, now restored to its former art deco beauty. Good eye Tom, and excellent work.

From the Library

Basic Electronics Learning Labs Available



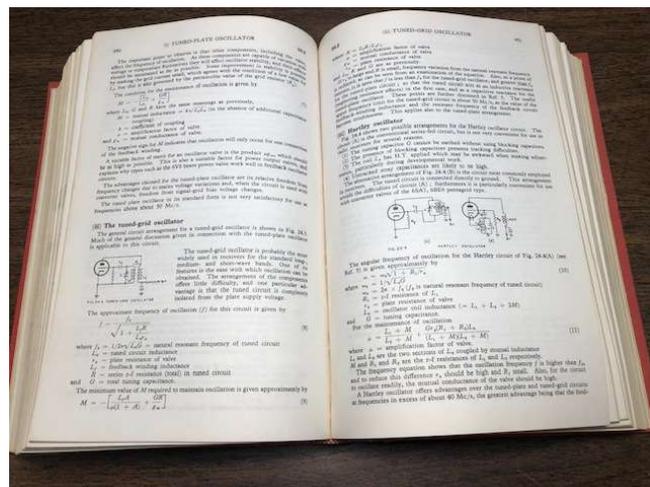
In addition to our regular electronics classes the library has three “Learning Labs” donated to the AHRS by the Amateur Radio Advancement Group. These are battery powered project oriented training aids for learning basic electronics. There are 200+ projects in the two included workbooks and all of the material, jumpers, resistors, capacitors, and devices necessary to complete the projects are included. The devices are available for checkout and use during regular workshop hours.

Check Out Our Extensive Library

The AHRS library, built over many years and carefully maintained by Dave Cisco, our Librarian, is a significant resource for all of us. Want to know about Hartley, and Colpitts oscillators, discriminators, Class AB2 amplifiers? It is all there in our library ready to use during or regular workshop hours.

Of special note is the six shelves of items recently made available for check out. Sign up for one on the check-out shelves and take it home with you.

You are encouraged to drop into the library during our next workshop day and familiarize yourself with what is available.



SATURDAY MEETINGS

We meet every Saturday (unless a Holiday weekend) at 9:00 a.m., at the one-story AHRS Shop at the corner of 8th Avenue North and 18th Street, (1801 8th Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203). Birmingham, AL 35203). Use the rear (Southeast) entrance.

TUESDAY MEETINGS

The Shop is open on Tuesdays at 9:00 a.m. until around 11:30 a.m. when we go to Marilyn's Deli and Dog for lunch next door. Note that parking can be a problem on Tuesdays, so you may have to find street parking occasionally.

REGULAR MEETINGS

We meet on the fourth Monday night of each month, too, at 7:00 p.m. 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 radios. 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!

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Membership dues are \$25 a year, payable beginning in January. If you have questions about your dues, you can contact Treasurer Mike Woodruff at 205-823-7204. Dues can be mailed to AHRS at P.O. Box 131418, Birmingham AL 35213.

WEBSITE

Be sure and check out our website at <https://www.alabamahistoricalradiosociety.org>, which has copies of all newsletters from 2006 to the present (click on News), videos, photo galleries, museum, Old Time Radio columns, Projects, Reading Rooms, Archives, and Contact Information

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