



April 2008



### ***A NOTE FROM THE PREZ***

April 12<sup>th</sup> is upon us, the great 100<sup>th</sup> birthday for Pete Sides is looking like the event of the year for our little group. If you haven't made your arrangements for transportation with us, we need to hear from you pronto. Our goal to have 100 people at the 100<sup>th</sup> party looks like a reality. Don't forget the bus and party are FREE!

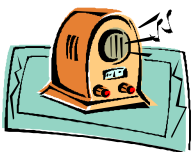
We were able to get all the radios moved back in the museum during the month of March and were able to change out most of the exhibits in two of the cabinets for new display items.

Dee and I did our program for two church groups since the last newsletter and received a very good report from both groups. We have two more programs scheduled in the near future. If you know of any senior groups that would be interested in seeing our program, let me or Dee know, and we will try to fit it into our busy schedule.

Don't forget Robert's class is the third Saturday (April 19) this month. Also, we have the BirminghamHamfest coming up May 3-4 and lots of prep work needs to be done. Saturdays that are not class days are the best time to get projects such as Hamfest done, so everyone who can needs to be at our Saturday work sessions.

That's all for now. See everyone this weekend at the party.

*Dave*



### ***DEE'S RADIO SHOWS***

Hello again folks,

This will be a short story this month, but to add a little to the last month's comments about Lum and Abner and the town of Pine Ridge, I notice on the map the little town of

Huddleston just east. I'll have to do the research to see if that town was named after Dick Huddleston. Well, anyway, whatever...

The month of March was busy, especially for my son Jeremy and his wife, Jenny. They had a baby girl, Emma, born on March 17. Shortly after that Dave and I did another AHRSP Presents show (formerly known as Dog and Pony) for Trinity Methodist Church and then a few days later, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April, we did the AHRSP for the big Methodist Church downtown. I must say the Methodists really enjoyed our shows. I wonder if the Baptists out there hear the challenge? Later this month we will do one for the Walker County Genealogical Society in downtown Jaisper. sic

Again, don't forget the <http://www.archive.org/index.php> website. I haven't found a better site for finding old shows and stuff.

C U Next Month

*Dee Haynes*

243-4630 or [k4hfx@bellsouth.net](mailto:k4hfx@bellsouth.net)



**Editor's Note:**

I am delighted to have two articles for the newsletter this month. Thanks to Steven Westbrook, who contacted Gary Stork, the author of the article featured below, who has given us permission to use it in the newsletter. Our thanks, too, to Gary Stork for providing such an interesting article about *The Voice of Music*®. In addition, Don Keith has written the article, *Why is My Radio "Deaf" at Night?* As an avid night-time listener, and one who is always turning the dial hunting a clear station, I could hardly wait to read his article.

**The Voice of Music**

**FOR COLLECTORS, ENTHUSIASTS, AND FRIENDS OF V-M CORPORATION AND ITS PRODUCTS**

Vol. 4. No. 1.

January, 1999

Published by Gary Stork four times a year (January, April, July, and October).

V-M Collector's Voice Newsletter  
37530 E. Meadowhill  
Northville, MI 48167-8915

"The Voice of Music® and other registered trademarks of V-M Corporation contained herein are used by permission.

The purpose of the V-MCV Newsletter is to foster interest in collecting and restoring V-M products, and to preserve the memory of V-M Corporation's role in audio history. January 2000 and forward issues are available free at [www.thevoiceofmusic.com](http://www.thevoiceofmusic.com), where you will also find interesting V-M history, photos, and how to contact us for repair/restoration parts and advice.

## **FROM THE EDITOR**

Welcome to another new year! I hope everyone had a joyous and safe holiday season. 1999 is the 55th year that V-M Corporation has been a registered corporation in the State of Michigan. I need to break the news to you, however, that this past year has seen a lot of change. The building at 305 Territorial in Benton Harbor, which V-M Corporation has been operating out of since the bankruptcy, has been demolished! Fortunately, much of historical and practical value has been saved, due to the diligent, hard work of many people. This issue will be devoted to documenting this recent history, with a focus on V-M's operations after the bankruptcy through the present.

In 1958, the Heath Company (Heathkit) of Benton Harbor built new, larger facilities in the southern part of nearby St. Joseph. They sold the building at 305 Territorial with the yellow brick facade to V-M Corporation. The growing V-M did some remodeling and occupied the building in 1959. Known as Building #17, it initially housed engineering on the lower floor and offices on the upper floor - removing these activities from Building #1, which housed record changer manufacture. This move permitted the record changer plant to expand capacity, and improve the conveyORIZED wash, rinse, bonderize, dry, electrostatic spray of enamel, bake, and cooling operations for baseplates, turntables, tone arm housings, etc. for record changers, plus a number of metal tape recorder parts. On the roof of Building #17, V-M placed a tall tower with an impressive antenna array for use by the tuner department.

The bankruptcy hit in mid-July of 1977. The ten buildings that V-M owned at the time were put up for sale at the court-ordered auction. Only a few sold at that time, and 305 Territorial never did sell. With the help of friends who believed in what V-M had been doing to generate money for the creditors for two years, some items were preserved. Such items, plus items that did not sell at all, eventually ended up in Building #17. On the first floor were assembly machines for manufacturing record changer cam gears, and other items, file cabinets containing tooling blueprints and communications, the engineering vellum files, boxes of service manuals, the V-M "historical" collection of equipment, and skids of parts literally scooped off the production floor when production ceased, to keep them from being stolen by vultures that "work" auctions largely for that purpose. There was also an area of workstations that would be used in the 1980's and early 1990's for various projects to be described later. The second floor retained some office area and numerous racks and skids for storing parts, service manuals, boxes and files from payroll, purchasing, the marketing and styling departments, etc. Some of this material had been literally thrown into boxes as the original desks, file cabinets, etc. that housed them were auctioned off. The remainder of the second floor was also used for various light assembly/repair operations during the years following the bankruptcy.

In January, 1985 the remaining stock of service parts was returned to the building after Data Communications, a Berrien Springs company that bought them at auction, no longer wanted to continue selling them. Victor Miller comments: "I remember a number of cold days in January when we moved load after load of parts back in. The ice was so thick some days that we had to chip it away to open the back door." These parts took a considerable amount of space on the second floor.

### **Better Days: 305 Territorial in November, 1962**

At first, within the bankruptcy, V-M Corporation was regulated by the Court, and had to obtain permission for all activity, especially manufacture. V-M projects under Bankruptcy Court supervision included the manufacture of Model 270-6 institutional monaural record changers, to be sent to Canada (the instructions on the inside lid were repeated in both English and French!), and a number of cassette decks for customers such as New Century Education Corporation, Beltone, and Terra Technology (see January 1998 issue). Cassette deck assembly continued as late as 1989, for former cassette deck customers with continuing needs.

V-M drew upon resourceful former employees as needed to carry out a number of other activities in the building. For Thompson Electronics of France (who subsequently took over the consumer home entertainment product lines of both GE and RCA), V-M in 1978 and 1979, reworked 20,000 of their turntables. Prior to the bankruptcy, V-M had, for the December 1976 Christmas season, custom assembled an early electronic ping pong game. The company that entrusted this rush project to V-M sought out V-M nine years later as Factory Direct Marketing with a number of projects - including the repair in large quantities of Cobra feature phones, AT&T answering machines, and car radio/cassette players.

By 1992, none of these projects remained profitable, and V-M Corporation retained only Lona Nalitt to handle parts and service manual sales, helping owners of V-M equipment to link up with qualified Service shops, and do the inevitable business bookkeeping required of any entity, regardless of how limited its activity.

Although I have been corresponding with V-M Corporation since I first began collecting in 1971, my first trip out there was not until 1994. By this time, the building's flat roof was in serious disrepair. Inside, there was plenty of plastic sheeting hung from the ceiling to direct water to strategically placed buckets, barrels, etc. The roof had already collapsed over a couple of smaller rooms, which were sealed off, but remarkably, was still intact over the main part of the building.

My trips began to become more frequent, as my interest grew. During 1995, 1996, and 1997 the trips included a mixture of activities, including obtaining parts, doing research for this newsletter, and along with some helpers, strategically relocating parts and other goodies to stay one step ahead of the in-house rainfall, melting snow, etc. At the end of the Winter of 1996, the boiler went out. Then the phone lines had to be restrung to bypass a short somewhere in the building. Additional parts of the roof were starting to collapse. A strong steel ladder was pressed into service to hold up one section. In June of 1997, after a brief inspection, the City of Benton Harbor posted "Condemned" signs on the building.

Strangely, nothing more was heard from the City for over a year. Fortunately, the winter of 1997-1998 was a mild one - and Lona was able to tolerate the front office temperature with the help of an electric heater. Victor Miller had a couple of other heaters located in the bathrooms to keep the plumbing from freezing. It appeared for awhile that they would be able to get through the winter without any water pipes freezing - but an early Spring cold snap proved to be too much. From that point on, the water was shut off to the extent that the old main valve would allow, as the pipes had burst in an inconvenient location. With a combination of a little city water for coffee and hand washing, and captured rainwater for the toilets, the facilities were rustic and crude, but useable.

Over the Summer of 1998, articles began appearing in the local newspaper about a possible new use for the land on that block, including the old record changer plant (Building #1) on the North side of the block bordered by Territorial, Fourth, and Park streets. It became clear that I had to pick up the pace in moving parts, manuals, etc. out of there. I organized a trip on Saturday, September 5 with Mike Schnabel and John Reinicke. We learned that morning that someone had been in the building the previous day - as evidenced by a disposable protective suit of clothing. Finally, the next week Victor Miller heard from Cornerstone Alliance - a government/private group spearheading urban renewal in Benton Harbor. He attempted to reason with them about a reasonable time to vacate the condemned building - but there was no give. My work and that of whoever I could rustle up, was now proceeding at a fever pace. I exhausted my remaining vacation days, worked Saturdays and Sundays to get the parts, manuals, etc. out. A second phone call to Victor Miller from Cornerstone Alliance on Friday, September 11 confirmed the worst - V-M had to be out in a week! Only a little relief could be negotiated- the next Wednesday after that - because a crew was coming to empty the building of all contents.

I went out both that Saturday and Sunday. Work crews arranged by Victor and his brother Stanley, everything they could that week and into the next week until the wrecking crew came on the scene Wednesday, September 23. They took over even as Lona, Victor, and the various work crews were scrambling to get things out. They brought in a big machine with claws, and proceeded to push interior walls and anything else that remained, out through a hole they had made in the back of the building. There, trucks would pick it up and haul it to the landfill. The work proceeded extremely fast. I had several important assignments at work and could not get out there those last few days. I got daily reports from Lona and Victor, as we concentrated on priorities of what remained. By Thursday afternoon, the claws cut the power, and by Friday - it was all

over. The building was empty. The next couple of weeks involved removing asbestos from the building and preparing it for demolition. The structural wrecking started the week of October 19, and by the time I snapped the picture for this Newsletter on October 24, both the building at 305 Territorial and the old record changer plant were gone.

The Epilogue: Victor Miller, Lona Nalitt and I sincerely thank those who helped in those last days. The honor role: Frank Dettloff, Paul Garbarcyk, Greg Platt, Mike Schnabel, and for his many trips and good advice - John Reinicke, plus the Benton Harbor work crews. We got out the entire remaining stock of service parts, some service and owners manuals, blueprint files, purchasing files, and many other relics and one-of-a-kind items - including a prototype V-M video tape recorder! I hope that everyone reading this realizes the positives that have come from this situation. The historical files, parts, manuals, etc. now have a less humid home than they've had in some time. Victor Miller does not have to spend hours after each rain and/or snow melt emptying water buckets anymore. Lona no longer has to worry about who might be at the door, when the phone line would go dead, when the boiler would quit, or when the next deluge would call for boots.

Today, V-M Corporation remains a registered corporation in the State of Michigan. The phone line at (616) 925-8841 has been transferred to Victor Miller's residence. The answering machine now refers people to write to me for parts, manuals, certain accessories, and general information about their V-M product. I have set up "V-M Audio Enthusiasts" for the purpose of conducting this business, at the same address as this Newsletter. I will continue to help whoever I can and in general, offer up low, 1975 V-M prices. If you need anything V-M, please write.

Again, thanks to everyone who helped this past Summer and Fall. The Voice of Music shall live on!

"The Voice of Music" ® and other registered trademarks of V-M Corporation contained herein are used by permission.

### **Why is My Radio "Deaf" at Night?**

By Don Keith N4KC  
[www.donkeith.com](http://www.donkeith.com)  
[www.n4kc.com](http://www.n4kc.com)  
[don@donkeith.com](mailto:don@donkeith.com)

Those of you who love and collect antique radios often enjoy listening to them as much as you do restoring and admiring their beauty and heritage. But as you tune around the dial at night—and especially on the AM broadcast band—you may notice that some stations seem to get weaker or disappear altogether when the sun goes down. Some of them right here in town that are plenty strong when the sun is up all but



disappear after dark. Yet others, usually from distant cities, suddenly come in clearly and are perfectly listenable. Why is this? Why does that beautiful vintage radio suddenly develop hearing problems at night? And why does it reach out and grab distant signals in the dark?

There are actually two answers why this happens, and they both apply to most any radio that receives the AM broadcast band, not just your antique radio. One of those explanations is natural and the other manmade.

Some of the signals transmitted by radio stations at certain frequencies—including those broadcast between 550 and 1700 kilohertz, the AM broadcast band—actually tend to bounce off different layers of the atmosphere at night. As the techies say, “They propagate differently at night.” During the day, due to actions of the sun on certain atmospheric layers, those signals are absorbed and not reflected back toward earth much at all. The signals you hear during the day are from relatively nearby stations and those radio waves are the ones that roughly follow the contour of the earth. They are called ground waves.

After the sun goes down, though, those same levels of the atmosphere above us change form and act like a mirror, deflecting signals from those same stations back toward earth. But just like a basketball careening off a backboard and into the net, those signals may be reflected to receivers hundreds or even thousands of miles away. You may notice that you cannot hear any strong signals on 870 on the dial during the day. But then, just as the sun goes down and crickets begin chirping, WWL in New Orleans rolls in. And as you listen up and down the dial, you begin hearing WSM in Nashville, WLW in Cincinnati, WBAP in Ft. Worth, WLS in Chicago, and others. You may even hear stations in New York or Denver, or others from Mexico or Canada.

But how about those stations nearby that are strong during the day but almost disappear in the clutter at night? What happened to that powerful ground wave signal? Did the sun going down make it weaker? No, the action of the sun or the various layers of the atmosphere has nothing to do with that, other than to let more distant signals reflect back and cause some interference. But that phenomenon of atmospheric nighttime propagation is an indirect reason why you may lose WSPZ 690 or WAPI 1070 at night where you live.

When the Federal Communications Commission (way back when it was called the Federal Radio Commission) began licensing commercial broadcast stations, they recognized the fact that stations covering much greater distances at night would cause a real interference problem. Either they would have to drastically restrict the number of stations that were allowed to have a license to broadcast, or they would have to come up with some way to control things at night when all those signals started bouncing all over the place, ping-ponging down at great distances. If everybody stayed on the air, ran full power, and used non-directional antenna systems, there would be chaos at night, and stations would not even be able to serve their local areas.

So the regulatory agency came up with several ways to minimize the problem. First, some frequencies were designated as so-called “clear channels.” Stations licensed to these frequencies could run high power—as much as 50,000 watts—24 hours a day. They were also designated to serve local areas during the daytime and whole regions of the country at night. Other frequencies were set up for lesser powered operations so more cities could have stations on the air, providing news and information reliably to a specified area. Some of those stations were required to reduce power at sunset or even go off the air completely. Still others were required to operate a directional antenna system at night, beaming their signals away from other stations assigned to the same frequencies in distant cities.

This rather complicated jig-saw of station coverage patterns actually works quite well and enables many more stations to be on the air without causing undue interference to each other.

If you grew up in this area, you may remember one prime example of such day/night broadcasting restrictions. In the 1970s, I worked for WVOK-AM, which was licensed at 690 kilohertz and had a powerful signal with 50,000 watts of power. That station was on what was termed a “Canadian clear channel.” That meant that at night, we were required by international treaty to protect stations operating in Canada. And the way we protected them? Each day at sunset, we had to pull the big switch and sign off for the night!



You may remember that we were owned by a company called The Voice of Dixie Incorporated, and we ended the day by playing “Dixie.” Hank Williams Jr. even mentioned us in a song of his. “The stations up here they don’t sign off with ‘Dixie,’ the way they do in sweet home Alabam’,” he sang.

And of course, WVOK did not come back on the air until sunrise the next day. This meant that in winter, when sunset and sunrise are very early and very late, we signed off at 4:45 in the afternoon and came back on the air at 7 in the morning. That gave us a very limited broadcast day! I remember several occasions when our engineers would turn the signal on in the wee hours of the morning to test something and they would inevitably get a call from WLW in Cincinnati (next door on the dial at 700 kilohertz), asking what the heck they were doing interfering with them. The announcers at WLW could hear WVOK on their station monitor in the studio!

In the 1980s, the treaty was renegotiated and WVOK was allowed to operate at night with a walloping 32 watts! Yes, at sunset, we went from 50,000 watts down to less power than the light bulb over your bathroom mirror! But at least we were on the air at night and, with a good frequency location and a big tower, we did surprisingly well with that low power. Later, the station was allowed to install a second tower out in Midfield west of town that directed some of the signal to the southeast, and the power was raised to 500 watts at night, which is where they are today.

Still, depending on where you live, you may not be able to hear the station very well at night. Other stations in town have similar directional signals. You may have seen the big towers at the State Fairgrounds at 5 Points West in Birmingham. That’s the directional antenna system for 610 that they use at night. Or all those towers west of Highway 75 north of Tarrant in Robinwood that belong to 850, a station that has to run directional signals both day and night.

But what about FM? You don’t notice all this day-and-night stuff happening to your favorite FM stations, do you? That is because the frequencies at which FM broadcasters operate are not susceptible to all that nighttime reflecting. Signals at those frequencies simply zoom right on through the atmosphere into outer space where, I assume, aliens enjoy our programming. While there are occasional long-skip signals—usually weather-related—on FM, it is unusual and does not disrupt normal local broadcasting.

So, do not think that beautiful vintage radio of yours is taking the night off just because you lose local signals when Old Sol disappears. It is all part of the plan, working with what Mother Nature provides to give us all a variety of stations to listen to with minimal interference.

---

Don Keith is head of advertising for Education Corporation of America, the parent company of Virginia College and Culinard. He is also a very active ham radio operator (N4KC) and a best-selling author. His book about USS *Nautilus*, the world's first nuclear-powered vessel, and her amazing trip to the North Pole in 1958, will be out this summer. His web site is [www.donkeith.com](http://www.donkeith.com) and he maintains a blog dedicated to discussion of rapid technological change and its effect on life, society and radio at [www.n4kc.blogspot.com](http://www.n4kc.blogspot.com).

## ***MEETING TIMES***

We meet nearly every Saturday of the month at 09:00 at the Alabama Power Building on Parkway East (aka Centerpoint Parkway) in Huffman. The organization's space is accessed from the rear of the building, so park around the back (by means of Huffman Road, which runs parallel to the Parkway). Entry is via the door on the right.

**Come to the Monday Night Meetings, TOO, on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month at 7 PM!**

## ***FREE ELECTRONICS CLASSES***

The first Saturday of the month, there are electronics classes free to members. Topics include test equipment, Resistors and Capacitance testing, Inductors and coil winding, to name only a few subjects!

We hope to see you there!



***WE ARE STILL ACCEPTING DUES!***

Membership dues are \$25 a year, payable beginning in January. If you have questions about the dues, you can contact Julian at 205-879-3619. **Dues can be mailed to AHRS @ P.O. Box 130307, Birmingham AL 35213.**

## **WHO TO CONTACT**

### **President – David Cisco**

205.822.6759

ciscod@bellsouth.net

### **Member and Instructor – Robert Frye**

205.631.6680

RLF100243@aol.com

### **Web site – Robert Matthews**

RMatthews@ms.soph.uab.edu

### **Web Address:**

<http://alabamahistoricalradiosociety.org/>

### **Newsletter – Patsy Desaulniers**

patwrite@juno.com



### **Editor's Note:**

Please keep me in your prayers on April 28. I am having a total knee replacement on that date. I have warned Dave that the newsletter may be delayed slightly in early May, but I will do my best to get it out ASAP. I am supposed to have the minimally invasive type of surgery, which should have a quicker recovery time. I will let you know the gory details in the next newsletter!