

The Alabama Historical Radio Society Newsletter

Alabama Historical Radio Society
SUPERFLUX

September 2015



NOTE FROM PRESIDENT TOM

Hello, all!

The Society has been busy since the last Newsletter. On August 14 and 15, we set up a display in the vendor display area of the Alabama Broadcasters Association (ABA) meeting at the Wynfry Hotel in Hoover, AL. We were one of 25 vendors and received many compliments on our display. The most troubling thing was the number of broadcast folks who did not know that we

existed (going on 28 years old). The good thing is that they now know that we exist and a lot of interest was shown toward our objectives and desire to preserve old radios. Those participating over the two-day event included Dave Cisco, Ed Boutwell, Dee Haynes, Johnny Outland, Jim Cawthon and me. The President of ABA, Sharon Tinsley, told us that if the displays were being judged, we would win the prize. We met many broadcasts folks (over 400 attended) and had some great conversations with some of the movers and shakers in the industry. We were there 10 hours on Friday and six hours on Saturday. Some pictures follow.

Upcoming Club Events

- **Ham Fests:**
 - Helena, AL, Oct 10
 - Stone Mtn., GA Nov 7-8
 - Montgomery, AL Nov 21
 - Two Boat Anchor Ham Fest: Dadeville, AL Oct 3



Dave Cisco working the ABA Display



Dee, Johnny and Dave with guest broadcasters



Dee and I ready for business.



Johnny and Jim ready for business



Center of display with pictures of KDKA's first DJ, several old Radio/ TV magazines and video slide show

While some of us worked the ABA event, others attended the Huntsville Hamfest. This year we chose not to have a booth at this event. Last year we had three tables and sold some surplus equipment and made a little money above expenses. The effort to have tables and sell stuff is tiring, and we wanted a break this year. There were many Society members there and are in a group picture below.



Radio Society members enjoying the Hamfest. Note: Dave and Johnny worked the ABA event on Friday.

Normally, we have radio class, fix old radios and have fellowship on Saturday workdays. On Saturday, August 29, we had a special guest speaker, Gary Richardson, the Mayor of Midfield, AL, a small, but fast-growing town on Birmingham's Westside. He also owns WJLD and WIXI radio stations and is the Technology Director for Bessemer City Schools. He spoke for an hour and forty minutes about his life in radio and the ups and downs of radio station ownership. We have been trying to get him to visit with us for some time. Thanks to one of our members and a past business partner of Gary's, Bob Friedman, for arranging this visit. The presentation was videotaped by our own Ed Boutwell and has been put on a DVD for future viewing. Thank you, Gary, for an interesting story.



Gary Richardson speaking to members at the Saturday workday.



Gary as a DJ, his first radio job in high school, at the Society radio station.

Robert Frye, our radio class instructor for many years, is off on medical leave. He will have surgery on October 12, at the University of Alabama in Birmingham (UAB). He will be there prior to the 12th for preparation for the operation. Please pray for Robert and Margaret as he undergoes this operation. Robert is planning to return to his radio class duties in January, 2016. Dave Cisco is handling radio class duty for Robert while he is out. The September radio class on September 5 was well attended by members. Dave used the Radio Demonstrator to show members where to start checking out a radio and how to use a voltmeter (Simpson 260) to troubleshoot the various stages of an all-American five radio. He used a signal tracer to find the signal in several sections of the radio circuit. Dave also used the ARRL Handbook as a reference book for the class. Each member was given an older copy (pre-1970) ARRL Handbook for their use. The older Handbooks have chapters on tube circuits and tube charts in the back, whereas, the newer Handbooks have converted to more solid state circuits and theory. Several chapters were highlighted for future study.



Dave Cisco using Radio Demonstrator



Dee helps Dave as Don Letchman takes notes.



Dave is showing the pages of symbols in one of the library reference books.

As our library grows, we have amassed more duplicate books. Dave Cisco, a member of the Library Committee, has set up some special shelves for these books. These books are available for check out for home reading. The shelf is marked and a picture follows. As books are added, more shelves will be marked for check out.



Books in Library available for check out.

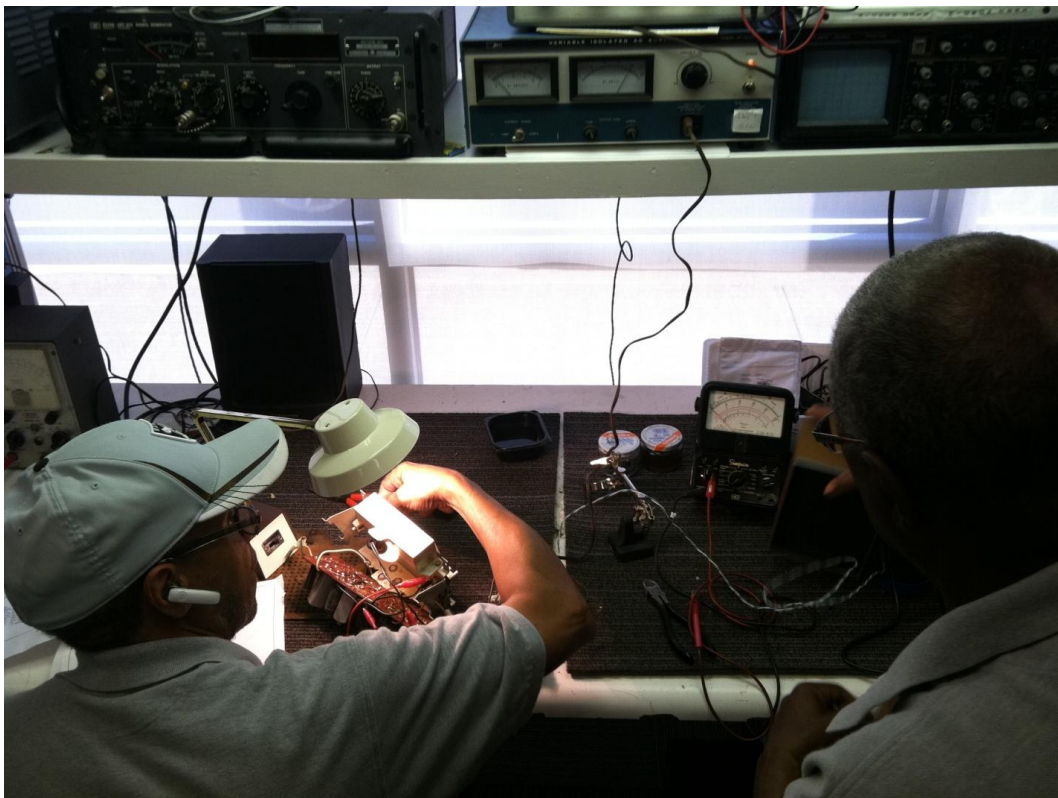
Here are some interesting pictures of activities at the Shop.



Dave Cisco and "Tower Guy" working on a Ham Band linear amplifier.



Doc Holladay learning from the best, Dave Johnson, with curious onlookers.



Maurice Hill and Willie Henderson repairing a customer radio.

The next radio class will be on Saturday, October 3, at the Shop at 9 a.m.

The next fourth Monday night meeting will be on September 28, at the Shop at 7 p.m.

Come join us on Tuesday and Saturday mornings for fellowship and to repair old radios.

Thanks for your support!

Until next time!

President Tom

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WHY NOT LOOK OUTSIDE OR CONSULT A WEATHER ROCK?

By Hoyt Harwell

Davenport Smith, long-time radio newsman in these parts, told me years ago that when the weather people predict 80 percent rain, it merely means that four of the five people in the weather bureau think it might rain. Which prompts this: barring unseemly weather, how long should it take to find out about the weather?

After all, the only things we really want to know are whether it will be rainy or clear, hot or cold, calm or blustery. Yet these meteorologists (whatever happened to weather forecasters?) take several minutes to answer such simple questions.

Presumably they have to let us know about all the sophisticated gimmicks they have invested in, when most days all they have to do is look out the window. Or get a weather rock. Surely you remember weather rocks; if not, ask around. Anyway, these people try to regale us with such expressions as convective outlook, energy in the atmosphere, high pressure ridges, impacting, radar loop, tracking, future scan, ad infinitum.

It would be nice if someone would explain how these terms differ: a round of showers, stray showers, scattered showers, localized showers, intermittent showers, isolated showers, here and there showers, pop-up showers, a chance of showers. The time to really worry about the weather is when the talk turns to the echo effect, whatever that is. Then we can be thankful for warnings. Mostly, however, we are overloaded with the obvious.

Rarely do these weather experts use expressions that we can relate to, such as “raining cats and dogs,” “the devil’s beating his wife” and “frog-strangler.” Where did these idioms originate? With Mr. Google’s help, here are the most accepted explanations:

- Raining cats and dogs goes back to the filthy streets of old England when a heavy rain would sometimes carry dead animals. They didn't fall from the sky, but the sight of dead cats and dogs floating by in storms led to the expression.
 - The devil's beating his wife combines the ideas of the devil sending the fire of hell (rays of the sun), and his beaten wife's tears (rain). I have no idea why he would beat her. Or even her name, other than Mrs. Devil.
 - A frog strangler means a rain so heavy even a frog would have difficulty getting out of it. If you prefer other terms, how about gully-washer, duck-drowner, goose-drowner, sod-soaker, trash-mover, sheep-drowner or lightwood knot floater?
 - About "lightwood knot" – For you city-slickers, that also is known as fat wood, fat lighter, pine knot and lighter knot ("lighter'd knot" for short). It is the heavy, sappy core of a pine tree that is highly-flammable and therefore used as kindling. In the country, if you were told to "go fetch a lighter'd knot," you knew exactly what that meant.
- So much for today's weather report.



OLD TIME RADIO BITS

Hi Folks!

In last month's newsletter, Dee brought up the case of the missing shots in a Gunsmoke episode. How could Matt Dillon fire his gun twice and yet there wasn't a single gunshot heard? To understand how this could happen, one needs to understand sound effects in old time radio, and for that matter in some radio of today.

Unlike movie sound effects, radio sound effects were generally not added in post-production. They were created by Sound Effects artists as the radio program was being produced. These people are sometimes debatably called Foley artists. The reason I say debatably is that Jack Foley is credited with creating the art of post-production sound effects for movies – a relatively expensive process. The people who produce these movie sound effects are the real Foley artists. For radio, creating the sound effects as the live show was being produced was significantly cheaper, but the talents required were just as significant.

During the Golden Age of Radio, all shows were broadcast live. There was no magnetic tape (or digital media) to record the shows. The programs that exist today were usually cut to transcription disks, but the quality of the recording was many times inferior to that of live programs. It wasn't until the late 1940's or early 1950's that magnetic tape, and possible overdubbing, came to be of wide use.

So with the goal of making the audience happy (and in turn the sponsors) and at the cheapest price possible, the importance of Sound Effects artists is easily seen. These people were responsible for the creaking doors, the footsteps, the gunshots, the solemn fog horn, the space capsules opening, and on and on. Many times there was a single Sound Effects artist to handle a show – just as there was only one announcer in a show. And since there was only one person with tools for creating the effects, if the particular tool malfunctioned, or if the cue was missed, the sound effect went missing.

I can offer a couple of items that illustrate the importance of the Sound Effects artist. There are very few radio shows being produced today that require these specialized talents. However, there is still one that is widely heard – A Prairie Home Companion. The show is recorded before a live audience, much the same as in the days of OTR. On YouTube there are many clips from this show that can be used to show how sound effects are created. The one I have chosen is a Guy Noir segment from 2009 and can be found [here](#). The Sound Effects artist is the man on the far left. He has all of his tools directly in front of him. The segment is only about nine minutes long, but if you are the impatient type, skip ahead to the four-minute mark. It is at this point that you can see a demonstration of the artist at work.

My second example is Remember WENN, a television show that was broadcast on AMC from 1996 to 1998. The program was a favorite of mine for two reasons. The first one is that it dealt with OTR. The second is that the call letters of the fictional station in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, were WENN, the same as our station here in Birmingham, Alabama. The series has never been released on DVD, but fortunately one person recorded the shows on tape and put them on YouTube. The quality is only mediocre, but that probably adds to the premise of an old time radio show. Mr. Foley, the Sound Effects artist, plays an important part in the show. The first episode can be found [here](#). If the show catches your interest, other episodes are on YouTube also.

So this month there are no links to Old Time Radio shows. However, the links provided may give you an insight into how these OTR shows were produced.

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

Larry Lokey

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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.

SHOP ON TUESDAYS

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!



DUES INFORMATION

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.**

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!

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