

May 2017

NOTE FROM PRESIDENT TOM

Hello, All!

Greetings from the Alabama Historical Radio Society to members, non-members, interested individuals and those who may have accidentally reached this page. We love you all for your interests in our Society!

Legends of Broadcast

The month of April has been an active and fulfilling time, especially with the seventh annual Legends of Broadcast held at the Shop. More than 40 legends and members enjoyed the event and the fellowship of fellow broadcasters. As usual, the stories of radio and TV history were ripe with the way things used to be, most not meeting today's politically correct requirements. The whole bunch would most likely be shown the door today.

One story stood out above the others as a testament to the strength of one man and the tenacity of his wife to complete her mission. In the Eighties, Jerry Levin, who was a news correspondent working in Lebanon, was captured by the local rebels and was held hostage for 11 months. His wife, Sis, worked to get him freed over that eleven-month period and was ultimately successful. The emotion of this event touched everyone there and made this year's Legends more memorable. There is a group picture with most of the Legends present; however, some had left and some had not yet arrived. Everyone there was glad they came and look forward to next year's event.



A group picture of the Legends present at picture time

Legends of Broadcast (continued)



Everyone enjoyed a good meal from Marilyn's Deli and Dog.



Jerry Levin talking about his kidnapping in Lebanon when a news correspondent there in the 80's.

Legends of Broadcast (continued)



Sis Levin has everyone's attention as she talks about Jerry's ordeal in Lebanon



Greg Bass tells stories while he is operating the radio studio at the Shop.

Legends of Broadcast (continued)

During the event, Don Kirkpatrick, made a presentation of a placard for the teletype machine donated to the Society in memory of Courtney Haden, who recently passed away and was a respected member of the Legends of Broadcast.



The teletype machine donated in Courtney Haden's memory.

Legends of Broadcast (continued)



The Joe Rumore Studio as it was shown during the Legends event.

Julian Harris Donation

In early May, several members traveled to Pensacola, Florida, to pick up part of the radios and equipment donated to the Society by Julian Harris, an attorney, an avid radio collector and an amateur radio operator (ham). Two trips were made over a two-week period bringing over 200 radios, including amateur, military, commercial radios and equipment, along with test equipment and miscellaneous items, such as a rare emergency radio kit found in World War II airplanes called a Gibson Girl.

While at the Naval Air Museum in Pensacola, we inquired about the Gibson Girl, as the airplane cutaways showed life rafts and other emergency items for use in bail out or crash situations, but no Gibson Girls. It turns out that the Museum has one Gibson Girl, but it is on loan to another museum. The radios donated by Mr. Harris are in excellent condition. Also, his donation included over 50 keys used to send Morse code. He learned to use code when he was around nine years old and this knowledge served him well throughout his life. He has many stories to tell about this! Mr. Harris is a true friend and benefactor to our Society!

Julian Harris Donation



Julian Harris pointing to one of his Hallicrafter radios.

Julian Harris Donation



The Gibson Girl (in the yellow-orange bag middle picture) safely placed in the trailer for transport.



Dave Cisco carefully packing the code keys for travel.

Julian Harris Donation



Steven Westbrook inventoried every item, over two hundred, before it was loaded in the trailer.



The trailer, loaded with about 2,000 lbs. of radios, ready for the return trip to Birmingham.

Julian Harris Donation



Thanks to the unloading crew for helping remove over 150 radios from the trailer. This was the second trip, and I failed to get a picture of the unloading crew for the first trip, but their help was appreciated, also.

May Radio Class

The May Radio Class met on May 6 at the Shop and provided the students an opportunity to discuss the future direction of class training. The group brainstormed subjects that they wanted to learn about and a list of eight to ten topics was agreed to. The list is flexible and can be modified as necessary to meet their needs. There will be several different instructors, as they are available, with no one having to teach every class. Also, the use of YouTube videos showing how to restore or repair particular radios will be available for class work.

May Radio Class

The May class watched a video showing the repair of a Zenith wooden table top AM radio and learned some new "tricks" on radio repair. The class will be more hands-on to learn how to repair old radios.

I spent several hours visiting Robert Frye and his wife Margaret several weeks ago and they are doing well. Robert was our radio class instructor for several years; even when he moved to Loxley, AL, he would SKYPE in to the Shop to teach the class. He would like to do that occasionally in the future. Also, he wants to teach a class in person one Saturday if he can get his UAB appointments lined up to allow that. We welcome Robert back to teach (or just visit) whenever he is able! If you are ever in the Loxley, AL area, give him a call. He and Margaret enjoy seeing folks!



May Radio class watching a YouTube video on repairing a Zenith wooden table top AM radio.

The next Radio Class will be on June 3 at the Shop in Birmingham beginning at 9 A.M. We will work from the list mentioned above, including some hands-on repair. Come learn how to repair old radios. The next Monday night meeting will be on May 22 at the Shop beginning at 6 P.M. The program is TBA. Come enjoy some fellowship and learn what is happening at the Society.

See you there.

President Tom

205-936-5455

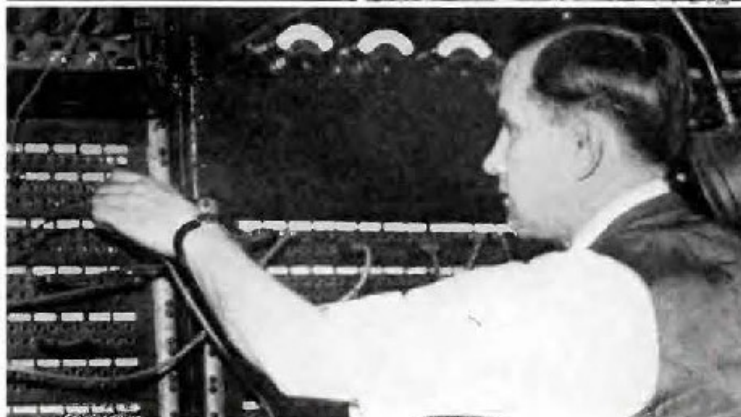
music.tomdj@gmail.com

OLD TIME RADIO BITS

A couple of weeks ago, I received an email from the Old Time Radio Researchers (OTRR <http://otrr.org>) about some additional issues of radio magazines being added to the OTRR site. Having a couple of minutes, I decided to check out one of them. At random I chose the magazine *Stand By* which was published by station WLS in Chicago.

Strange as it may seem, the magazine I picked ([Stand By - May 5, 1937](#)) was published 80 years ago this month. The lead story dealt with the zeppelin *Hindenburg*, which met with disaster on May 6, 1937. Unlike most articles associated with the crash, this one detailed the story of the famous broadcast's journey to the air. Radio journalist Herb Morrison along with engineer, Charlie Nehlsen, had been dispatched by WLS to Newark, New Jersey to record the landing of the Hindenburg. The recording was scheduled to be played on WLS at a later time. The story of how the actual recording came to be and its life after the crash is interesting reading. In case you have never heard the broadcast, you can listen to it [here](#). This seven-minute recording is the most complete one in my collection. It is quite interesting when viewed through the eyes of history.

With permission from the OTRR, I am including the article on the following pages. Bear in mind that this is a scan of the magazine and that you may need to zoom in on the pdf file to read the print.



Top left, Announcer Herb Morrison who made radio history with one of the finest eye-witness stories of all time. Above, the Hindenburg over New York en route to Lakehurst. At left, Engineer Charles Nehlsen who made the recording under extreme difficulty. On opposite page, Journey's End.

explained why the zeppelin had been delayed and gave a graphic description of the interior of the ship. When the Hindenburg came into view, slowed down by the rain, Herb described its approach and descent as the ground crew caught the ropes and started to pull the nose down.

Herb's own story is:

"All motors but one were dead and this was a left rear, which was sputtering and about to stop. Just as I told about the motor, there was a sudden blinding flash from the tail surface. I shouted 'It's burst into flames!'"

The first explosion knocked the needle off the record, but quick-thinking on Charlie's part saved the transcription and he was able to pick up Herb's very next words.

Recovering from the shock and horror of his first sight of the disaster, Herb carried on his running account, telling about the second explosion.

As soon as the flaming wreckage crashed to earth, Herb shouted, "Fade it away, Charlie." He rushed to the fiery furnace that had been the Hindenburg and helped remove Phil Mangone, the first (To page 12)

UNDER FIRE!

"It's burst into flames!"

With those words Herb Morrison recorded the beginning of one of the greatest special events scoops in the history of radio... the Zeppelin Hindenburg disaster!

When Herb and Charlie Nehlsen boarded an American Airlines plane, carrying special recording equipment, Wednesday noon, they expected to get an unusual and interesting transcription of the landing of the Hindenburg on its first 1937 flight.

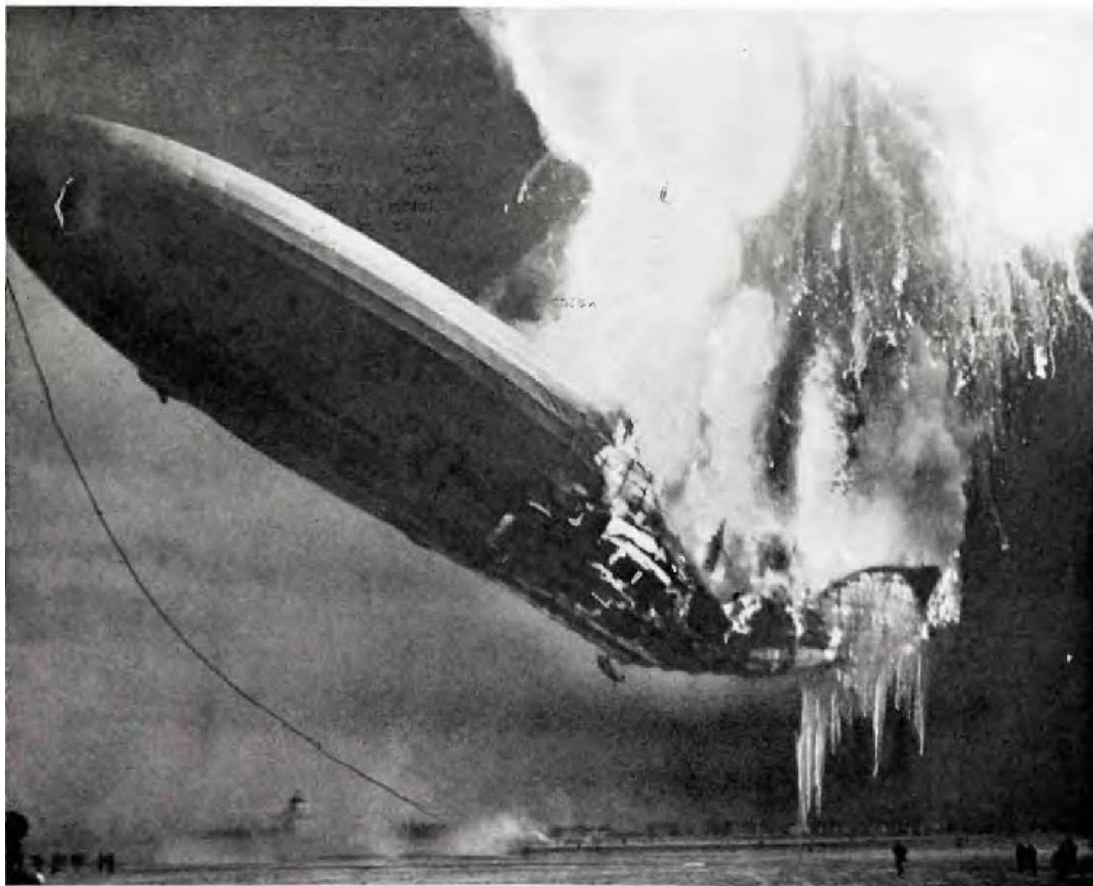
But the unexpected happened! And they recorded the only verbal eye-witness account of the tragic explosion of the zeppelin, which caused the death of at least 34 passengers and members of the crew.

Single-handed, Herb covered a run-

ning story of the crash from the first explosion until the flames were extinguished.

Thousands of WLS listeners heard this transcription in full on May 7 at 11:45 a.m., CST. So many requests were received to repeat the transcription for a night audience that a condensed version was broadcast again on WLS, May 8 at 9:30 p.m. Also, portions of it were broadcast over the NBC-Red network, May 7 at 2:30 p.m. and again that evening.

For three weeks Herb had read everything he could find about the Hindenburg and other lighter-than-air craft in preparation for the broadcast from Lakehurst, New Jersey. When he and Charlie started making the record at 5:00 p.m., CST, he



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Under Fire!

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survivor to get out of the wreckage.

Mangone, as Herb explained in the transcription, had jumped through the observation window to the ground, some 60 feet below. Many of the passengers followed suit and would have undoubtedly been killed, except that they landed in deep sand. Mangone was seriously burned and Herb helped get him to a car to be taken to a hospital.

Gathering together a number of survivors, Herb interviewed some of them for the transcription, including one who spoke only German but whose description of his jump was translated by an interpreter. Another survivor, Herbert O'Laughlin of River Forest, Illinois, was right next to the microphone but Herb said, "I can't ask him to talk." Many of the survivors were so dazed that they were unable to speak.

Not exaggerating the death toll, Herb made no effort to over-dramatize the tragedy. At first, it looked as if it would be impossible for anyone to escape the zeppelin alive; but Herb refuted this report as soon as he had an opportunity to check it.

"Thank God, I jumped!" exclaimed one of the survivors into the microphone and this was fervently echoed by all who had jumped.

One of the most interesting interviews of the transcription was that with one of the airline stewardesses, who had been on nurse duty for the injured. At first too shocked to talk, she later told about the emergency hospital in the "lighter-than-air" hangar where many of the survivors were taken for first aid.

After more than two hours of intermittent broadcasting—the transcript ran between 40 and 45 minutes

Under Fire!

(Continued from page 12)

—Charlie and Herb hastily packed up their equipment to catch the last plane to the Newark airport. Charlie carefully guarded the precious records while Herb, who is rather slight, lifted the 87 pounds of equipment over his head and into the nose of the plane.

Incidentally, the recording apparatus used was manufactured by Presto Recording Company. The recording amplifier and turn-table are standard WLS equipment. In order to cut down on the weight of the equipment, a special mike, pre-amplifier and other apparatus were used, through arrangements with Richard Brock, Midwest sales representative of Presto.

Herb and Charlie left Newark on the night owl flight of the American Airlines and arrived in Chicago early Friday morning.

Tired, unshaven and still shocked by their terrible experience, Charlie and Herb spent most of the day receiving congratulations and having their pictures taken.

"The whole night was like a horrible nightmare," Herb says. "If it hadn't been for Charlie, I would have broken down completely. He was calm through it all and kept me on my course. He was the real hero!"

When asked about the experience, Charlie shakes his head and advises: "Ask Herb. He saw the whole thing. All I did was stick to my post and record his work."

Together, announcer and operator, these two stood under fire and brought listeners the most dramatic story in radio history.

Just a few days after reading the *Stand By* article, I read another article on [America's Love Affair with the Hindenburg](#). This article contains a *YouTube* video of the crash, along with a sound clip of the launch of the *Hindenburg*. There is one line in the article that characterizes this relatively new toy called radio:

"Morrison's recording offered the nation a first glimpse of broadcast journalism's stunning emotional potential."

Obviously broadcast journalism has changed over the years. In this day and time, it is sometimes hard to discern broadcast journalism from broadcast entertainment. However, listening to Herb Morrison's broadcast, the truth and the emotion of the moment can be felt.

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

Larry Lokey

larry@otronmp3.com

Website - otronmp3.com

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 6:00 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 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 INFORMATION



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

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2017 HAMFEST AND SWAP SCHEDULE (FOR AL, GA, TN AND MS)

06/03/2017 Atlanta Hamfestival

Location: Marietta, GA

Website: <http://atlantahamfest.com>

06/17/2017 Knoxville Hamfest & Electronics Exhibition

Location: Knoxville, TN

Website: <http://www.w4bbb.org>

11/11/2017 Montgomery Amateur Radio Club Hamfest 2017

Location: Montgomery, AL

Website: <http://www.w4ap.org/news/Hamfest.htm>