

October 2018

NOTE FROM PRESIDENT DAVE



Greetings to All!!!

I hope this new month finds everyone doing well! The September Society meeting was well attended. Advance PR for the meeting brought a large audience for the program about Nikola Tesla given by Dave Cisco. Thanks to Dave for an excellent program. With the help of Ed Boutwell and Ken Smith, the program was memorialized on video and is now available for viewing on YouTube.

Donations of radio and radio related paraphernalia continue to come in at a brisk pace. We recently received an educational demonstration radio built as a drawer.

This unit uses octal tubes, so it is older than the one currently used in the electronics classes, which uses miniature tubes. This addition will add a new dimension to the teaching aids used in our classes.

The Society is planning an auction this fall. The exact date will be set soon and will be well advertised. The co-chairmen of the Committee, Willie Henderson and Ray Giles, are beginning the process of choosing items for this auction. If you know of an item you wish to be considered for the auction, please make your thoughts known to Willie or Ray.

We continue to get requests from various groups in the area for our members to present radio history programs. The Society currently has only a few members involved in this activity. We need more members that will help with this effort. These programs give us great publicity and sometime generate very nice donations. If you would like to be a part of this team, please contact me.

One last item: The premier of the long-awaited blockbuster movie based on a book written by one of our members, Don Keith, is here. The premier date of ***Hunter Killer***, based on the book, ***Firing Point***, is set for October 26. The story line has been presented as follows:

"Below the polar ice cap, an American nuclear submarine moves quietly in the freezing water, tailing a new Russian sub. But the usual, unspoken game of hide-and-seek between opposing captains is ended when the Americans hear sounds of disaster and flooding, and the Russian sub sinks in a thousand feet of water. The American sub rushes to help, only to join its former quarry in the deep. The situation ignites tensions around the world. As both Washington and Moscow prepare for what may be the beginnings of World War III, the *USS Toledo*—led by young, untested Captain Joe Glass—heads to the location to give aid. He soon discovers that the incident was no accident. And the men behind it have yet to make their final move. A move only Glass can stop."

The movie has an all-star cast and is not one to be missed.

NOTE FROM PRESIDENT DAVE (continued)

Bring your project and come to the shop on any Tuesday or Saturday. If you need help with your project there is always someone there who will be happy to assist.

See you at the shop!

President Dave

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WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE SHOP

Some recent pictures of members working at the Shop:



Jimmy Roberts replacing capacitors in the radio he is restoring.



Willie Henderson and Ray Giles restoring a client radio.

September's Monday night program on Nicola Tesla was presented by Dave Cisco. Dave did extensive research on Tesla and summarized Tesla's strange life and important contributions to radio. As President Dave mentioned in his comments, this presentation will be available on our website soon. Dave Cisco is our Librarian and, as such, he displayed the books on Tesla, which can be found in our library. Look them over next time you are at the Shop.

The next Monday night meeting is scheduled for October 22, beginning at 7 p.m. at the Shop in Birmingham. The program will include a live auction of radio gear, test equipment, record players, tape recorders and miscellaneous items. The auction is open for members who have paid current dues.

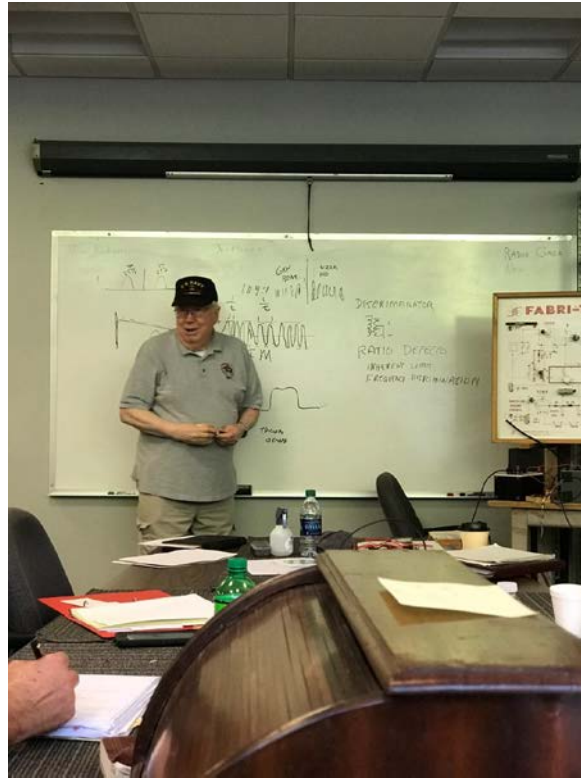


Dave Cisco presents the program on Nicola Tesla to members attending the September night meeting.

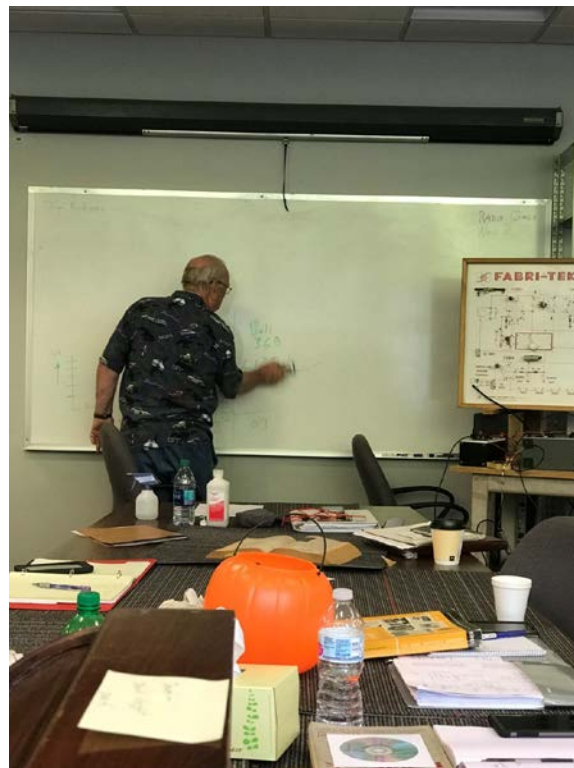


Dave Cisco reviews the life and accomplishments of Tesla. Note the books on the table in front of Dave - all available in the Society Library for research on Tesla.

Radio classes are continuing to be offered on the first Saturday of each month, taught by member instructor, Jim Rogers, and guest instructors like Dee Haynes, who taught the September class and Jim Rogers, who taught FM theory to the October class. The next class will be on November 3, beginning at 9 a.m. at the Shop in Birmingham.



Member Jim Rogers teaching FM radio to the radio class students.



Regular Instructor Joe Minor is back teaching radio class.

When member Steve Gerner made his most recent donations, I learned that his father owned and operated a TV Repair Shop in Pennsylvania when Steve was growing up. I felt like there was an interesting story there, but Steve moved away at the age of 18 to join the Navy and his memory has faded on the Repair Shop. He still remembered some facts and I included them in the picture captions.



Antique Telephone, donated by Steve Gerner, came from the offices of the United Natural Gas company in Oil City, PA. It had been used along with other phones as interoffice communications in the good old days. Steven used it and a candle stick phone as an intercom between his house and workshop in Virginia Beach, VA up until 1985.



Antique Speaker donated by Steven Gerner.



Arvin 441-T Hopalong Cassidy radio, Table-N, 1950, donated by Steve Gerner.



Federal Type 61 table radio, 1924, donated by Steve Gerner, was the first radio Steve's father collected and has been in the family since at least 1960. The red color is not original.



Sonora 1934 Floor Model donated by Steven Gerner.



Atwater Kent in Red Lion Cabinet, donated by Steven Gerner.



Yaesu FRG-7700 Receiver donated by Steve Gerner, used by his father in his amateur radio station (K3GDD) until his death in 2008.

The Alabama Historical Radio Society (AHRs) was asked to make a presentation about general radio history including old radio shows and commercials, AHRs history and radio history in the Birmingham area to the New Horizons organization, which represents retirees and friends of the University of Alabama in Birmingham (UAB). Three AHRs members made presentations, including Dave Cisco on general radio history and radio history in the Birmingham area, Dee Haynes on old radio shows and commercials, and I spoke on the history of AHRs. Souvenir vacuum tubes, new in the box, used during World War Two in aircraft altimeters, were offered to those attending the presentation. The Society received an Honorarium for the presentation. Speaking to groups about the history of radio is one of our educational objectives.



Dave Cisco presenting radio history in general and in the Birmingham area to New Horizon members.



Dee Haynes presenting interesting facts about old radio programs and commercials to New Horizon members.



Tom Killian presenting the history of the Alabama Historical Radio Society to New Horizon members.

I have been asking for stories from members, many of whom have had interesting careers in the communications field. One member, Marvin Moss, was an actual "rocket scientist" for over 30 years before retirement. He sent me a story from his youth that helped shape his interests in amateur radio, which follows.

REMEMBRANCES OF A SUMMER AT WMMB MELBOURNE, FLORIDA IN 1954

When I graduated from Melbourne High School in June of 1954, I thought some time at the local radio station that was within walking distance of my home would be a fun way to spend the summer until I started college at the University of Florida in Gainesville in September of 1954. I had my Commercial First Class Radiotelephone License from the FCC that I got along the time of getting my ham ticket back in 1951.

I was hired to be on at night time from around 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. or whatever time we signed off. It was one of those huge Gates transmitters that took up half a room, but only put out 250 watts at night. With my First Class ticket, I could take meter readings every hour to make sure that we were still on frequency and putting out the right amount of power.

REMEMBRANCES OF A SUMMER AT WMMB MELBOURNE, FLORIDA IN 1954 (continued)

The station had all the modern conveniences of a typical station back then. We had two teletype machines grinding out the news on yellow rolls of paper in a sound-proof room and lots of 78RPM records we could play. We had one of the latest tape decks that was a rack-mounted, reel to reel Magnecorder that was the pride of the station. Commercials were read from an 8½ by 11 notebook over the console and each time a commercial was read, the time and name had to be recorded by hand in another notebook. 16-inch transcription discs had lots of different programs on them, and I was generally alone until sign-off time.

One of the most interesting features of the station was the fact that the vertical antenna was located out some distance into the water in the causeway between Melbourne and Melbourne Beach. As the tides changed and the water level went up and down, we had to constantly retune the transmitter final to maintain the proper output power. That was--until we came up with a great idea. This was to put a tuning capacitor at the base of the tower, so the tower could be retuned easily. However, we did not remote tune it, rather we figured out that the tide could retune it for us.

How did we do that? The capacitor shaft was connected to a long rod that went to a copper toilet bowl that floated in the water beneath the tower. As the tide went in and out, the capacitor, after careful adjustment, was self-adjusted by the action of the tide on the capacity of the variable capacitor at the base. It worked fine except every few months, the salt water would eat away at the bowl, and it would require replacement when it filled with water and no longer floated. Ah, those were the good ole days!

One of the long running jokes was because of the 250 watts at 1240 Kc (not Hz back then), our radio range at night would have been better if we had hung loudspeakers from the tower rather than depend on RF.

It was an enjoyable 3 months and I learned a lot.

Marvin Moss, W4UXJ

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE SHOP (continued)

Thanks, Marvin for this interesting story!

Elections are scheduled for the Annual Meeting in December 2018, prior to the Annual Christmas Party. If you are interested in serving as an officer or director, please let President Dave or me know your interest.

The Society is in a unique position with an abundance of donations which need to be processed, such as parts which need sorting and proper storage, test equipment which needs to be repaired and returned to Shop service, radios which need to be cleaned up and restored. There is something for every member who shows up on a Tuesday and/or Saturday morning to work. I personally need help sorting parts and getting them put up. There are many items that need to be taken to the Annex storage area on any given day. Put your work clothes on and come work some, enjoy some fellowship and see what we have to play with.

Thank you for your continued support of the Alabama Historical Radio Society!

Until next time!

Tom Killian

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Periodically, we will spotlight some of our members. This month's article is about Don Keith. Don is a well-published author, as well as one of our legends of Birmingham radio broadcasting. When Don writes, he is telling a story. In fact, one of his many stories has been adapted for a movie. This month the movie, *Hunter Killer*, based on one of Don's novels, opens nationwide.

Rather than try to match Don's writing talents, we asked Don to present his story in his own way. We hope you enjoy his story.

From Don:

I have been fascinated by the magic of radio since I was a toddler. My dad was one of the first TV repairmen in this area and always seemed to have a classic radio around. I vividly remember hearing distant stations fading in and out as Dad listened to radio early in the morning while I tried to sleep in. Then one day in his TV shop, he called me over and let me listen to some strange thumping sounds he was hearing just below the fifteen-meter amateur radio band on an old shortwave receiver. It was the Russian satellite Sputnik.

I was scared silly but utterly thrilled. The hook was set. From that point on, radio became a key part of my life. The magic of music and human voices—or that smidgen of Morse code from outer space—riding in on the wind absolutely fascinated this kid from backwoods Alabama.

I earned my ham radio license at age 13 and have been active on the air ever since, for more than fifty years (my call sign is N4KC). This interest also led me to pursue a degree in broadcasting and film and to a long career in radio. I first worked professionally as a deejay on a tiny AM station in Oneonta, Alabama, and then in Tuscaloosa while in college, plus a job at the TV production facility at UA. I actually earned 80 cents an hour Work Study for running camera, lighting shows, and saying into a microphone, "This program comes to you from the University of Alabama."

I also worked weekends while in school as a deejay at WVOK-AM in Birmingham then accepted a full-time position there upon graduation. I eventually helped put on the air WVOK-FM (later WRKK-FM), a legendary adult-rock station at 99.5 mhz. Then later I was on the air from a station with studios on Music Row in Nashville and owned WZEW-FM/92-ZEW in Mobile.

After more than two decades in which I was twice honored as *Billboard Magazine's* "Radio Personality of the Year" and won journalism awards from the Associated Press, UPI and Troy University. I eventually left the airwaves—sort of—to work with a company that developed and marketed software

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT (continued)

for media and the advertising industry. Later I ran the in-house ad agency and was responsible for PR and governmental relations for a large Birmingham-based company.

While traveling with a laptop computer for that software job, I began pursuing writing, another passion of mine. My first novel was published in 1995. *The Forever Season* was named Alabama Library Association's "Fiction of the Year." My second novel, *Wizard of the Wind*, was based on my experiences in broadcasting and closely paralleled what has taken place in the medium since the mid-90s. It is absolutely autobiographical. Both books remain in print and available. Another book, *The Ice Diaries*, was written with Captain William Anderson, who took the nation's first nuclear submarine, USS *Nautilus*, beneath the Arctic ice to the North Pole in 1958. That book was nominated for consideration for the Pulitzer Prize.

Those works were followed by more than 30 more, fiction and non-fiction, on subjects including college sports, biographies, NASCAR racing, writing and publishing, submarines, and World War II history. The truth is, I write about things that interest me. Luckily, they interest enough other people that I get to keep doing it.

I have also written for publications including *The Washington Post*, *CQ Magazine*, *The K9YA Telegraph*, *The Irish Times* and *American Legion Magazine* (who will publish another of my articles in their December 2018 edition, one that will be of interest to all old-time radio buffs and was suggested by AHRS's own Larry Lokey in an article he wrote for this very newsletter).

Four of my books deal with amateur radio, written especially for newcomers or those who want to dig deeper into the hobby. I was thrilled to receive the Bill Leonard Professional Media Award from the American Radio Relay League for an article on ham radio I wrote for *American Legion Magazine*. Incidentally, *Wizard of the Wind*, as well as my ham radio books, are available in the AHRS library.

Several of my books are submarine/Navy SEAL thrillers, co-written with former sub skipper George Wallace. The first, *Final Bearing*, was a national bestseller. The second, *Firing Point*, was optioned by Hollywood and is now a major motion picture titled *Hunter Killer*. The movie stars Gerard Butler, Academy Award-winners Gary Oldman and Common, and Linda Cardellini. The book has been re-issued by the publisher under the *Hunter Killer* title. And while I am resting, I am currently working on several other potential book, movie and TV projects.

I try to give back to others who are fascinated by any facet of radio. I regularly write for the eHam.net web site and maintain a web site with many articles available about ham radio: www.n4kc.com. My professional web site is www.donkeith.com.

OLD TIME RADIO BITS

Six years ago, this month, I wrote my first article for the AHRs newsletter. The subject was Orson Welles' *War of the Worlds* broadcast. This month marks the 80th anniversary of the Mercury Theatre presentation. Rather than trying a new approach to this topic, I am updating the original article with additional material that I have acquired since the first writing. I hope that you find this updated version interesting and remember a time when radio was a powerful force in our lives.

Ask any Old Time Radio enthusiast what the date October 30, 1938, represents and the answer will immediately be Orson Welles' [*War of the Worlds*](#). During a one-hour broadcast on the Columbia Broadcasting System, a major event in American folklore was born as Martians invaded the Earth around Grover's Mill, New Jersey. Depending on one's perspective, Welles either pulled off one of the greatest hoaxes in broadcast history, was innocent of any mischievousness, or capitalized on an opportunity that began as an innocent dramatic broadcast. No matter how the show is viewed in the eyes of history, there is no doubt that Orson Welles was a masterful showman and the presentation made him famous.

The broadcast, which was an episode of *The Mercury Theatre on the Air*, was largely presented in the format of a newscast complete with frequent live bulletins from the site of the Martian invasion. It only lasted a little over 55 minutes, but as a *sustaining show* was broadcast with no commercials, which only added to the realism. Even though the show began with a normal introduction, stating among other things that the year was 1939, the facts went unnoticed by many listeners. In the pre-World War II days of heightened tension, the stage was set for people assuming the worst and ignoring the small things, such as the extensive use of time-skipping. In one segment, the time from the beginning of a battle until the end only takes less than one minute.

In actuality many of the panicked listeners missed the beginning of the show due to them tuning in to the very popular *Chase and Sanborn Hour* with Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy. When the comedy skits of that show ended, and the Nelson Eddy music began, people may have tuned the dial looking for other broadcasts. Many could have landed on the news bulletins being broadcast about the invasion. Hearing only the newscasts which sounded real, they believed what they heard – Martians were invading the Earth. Some theorize that Welles structured the show to take advantage of listeners' habits, but Welles never said whether he did or did not.

To exemplify what could have happened, an industrious OTR enthusiast has taken both [*The Chase and Sandborn Hour*](#) and [*The Mercury Theatre on the Air*](#) and time-synced them together in one file just as they would have been broadcast. To listen to this file will take a little extra effort in that one show is on left channel and the other show is on the right channel. A speaker system that has a balance control or a pair of earbuds will easily allow you to listen to each show separately. Listening to the Chase and Sanborn show, there seems to be two places where the listener might have gone looking for another show. The first would be the beginning of the first musical number at approximately two minutes and twenty seconds. Tuning to the Mercury Theatre show at this point puts the listener into an official sounding weather broadcast. A minute and twenty seconds later a special bulletin is presented about explosions on the planet Mars. However, the more obvious point for the listener to change stations would be at approximately the fifteen-minute mark when the main comedy sketch has concluded. Tuning to the Mercury Theatre at this point puts one directly into talk about a meteor and a few seconds later the Martian spacecraft opens, obviously a dramatic moment. From there the action escalates as the Martians begin their attack on the Earth.

OLD TIME RADIO BITS (continued)

Just how widespread the panic was has been debated for years. The headline in the *New York Times* the next day was “Radio Listeners in Panic, Taking War Drama as Fact”. Radio stations reported receiving many calls from anxious listeners. Orson Welles held a press conference the next day concerning the broadcast. [Here are some excerpts from that event.](#)

There have been many recreations of the famous broadcast over the years. Some of them tried to adhere to the original broadcast, while others updated the story to today's standards. One of the best updated recreations was from NPR on the 50th Anniversary of the original broadcast. The [show is available on YouTube](#) and is well worth the listen.

No matter how one views the original show or its recreations, all demonstrate the power of the medium called radio. It is debatable as to whether we are too sophisticated in today's world to be fooled by such a broadcast. But – I ask you to imagine your favorite cable news network one night. You tune in a show for the day's news and are met with a live broadcast of an invasion from Mars in one of our states. Then ask yourself – is this real?

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 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!

DUES INFORMATION



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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.

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2018 HAMFEST AND SWAP SCHEDULE



Editor's Note

The next few pages have the 2018 Hamfest and Swap Schedule for the Southeastern United States. I have not edited these—they are copied directly from the ARRL site.

HAMFEST/CONVENTION

10/27/2018 | Jacksonville FREE Hamfest

Location: Jacksonville, FL

Type: ARRL Hamfest

Sponsor: North Florida Amateur Radio Society

Website: <http://nofars.net/home/hamfest>

Learn More

HAMFEST/CONVENTION

11/03/2018 | Fall 2018 LARC Hamfest

Location: Lakeland, FL

Type: ARRL Hamfest

Sponsor: Lakeland Amateur Radio Club

Website: <http://lakelandarc.org>

Learn More

2018 HAMFEST AND SWAP SCHEDULE (continued)

HAMFEST/CONVENTION

11/03/2018 | Georgia Section Convention (Stone Mountain Hamfest)

Location: Lawrenceville, GA

Type: ARRL Convention

Sponsor: Alford Memorial Radio Club

Website: <http://stonemountainhamfest.com/>

Learn More

HAMFEST/CONVENTION

11/09/2019 | Montgomery ARC Hamfest 2019

Location: Montgomery, AL

Type: ARRL Hamfest

Sponsor: Montgomery Amateur Radio Club

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

Learn More

HAMFEST/CONVENTION

11/10/2018 | Alabama Section Convention

Location: Montgomery, AL

Type: ARRL Convention

Sponsor: Montgomery Amateur Radio Club

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

Learn More

HAMFEST/CONVENTION

11/10/2018 | SPARC Fest

Location: Pinellas Park, FL

Type: ARRL Hamfest

Sponsor: St. Petersburg Amateur Radio Club

Website: <http://www.sparc-club.org>

Learn More

HAMFEST/CONVENTION

11/17/2018 | Flamingo Net / UMARC Free Flea

Location: Coral Gables, FL

Type: ARRL Hamfest

Sponsor: Flamingo Net / University of Miami ARC

Website: <http://FlamingoNet.8m.net>

HAMFEST/CONVENTION

12/07/2018 | West Central Florida Section Convention (Tampa Bay Hamfest)

Location: Plant City, FL

Type: ARRL Convention

Sponsor: Florida Gulf Coast Amateur Radio Council

Website: <http://fgcarc.org>

Learn More