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The 2007 Rochester Conference, One Man's Impressions

Photos by the author

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What a fine welcome I had coming to this meet. An attractive lady came up to me, threw her arms around me, and said that she hadn't seen me for a very long time. But she didn't mention my name and I don't remember ever seeing her before!

For several years now the Conference has started with a free "Member's Mixer" on the eve of the event. Hors d'oeuvres are served and a cash bar is available. It's a nice, relaxed way to kick off the event and get reacquainted with friends.



The Flea Market

The flea market opened the following morning at 6:00 a.m., while it was still dark. It didn't take me long to make my first purchase. It was a telegraph key to go with my World War I SCR 65 aircraft spark transmitter. I had first seen this key at our meet several years ago but with a price of \$1,000. Many prices were much lower this year and I was able to buy the same key for \$450!

Though the flea market was smaller this year, all but one of the vendors I talked with said they were very satisfied with their sales. I think some of the empty flea market spaces were there because members bought spaces strictly for parking. However, I can tell you that there is now plenty of free parking for everyone attending the meet.

Among the more interesting offerings and their asking prices were a rare World War I aircraft radio power distribution box (\$400); Peter Pan cathedral in beautiful condition (\$1,100); 1939 New York World's Fair with Trylon and Perisphere molded into the wood grill, also in fine condition (\$1495); Charlie McCarthy novelty radio (\$1,000); Model 447 AK, like new (\$775); two Crosley repwood cathedrals at \$375 and \$695--though they looked quite similar; Navy SE1420C receiver in good condition (\$4,800).

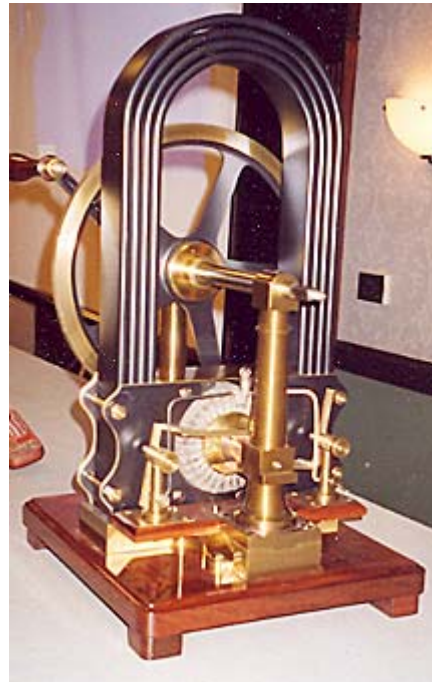
Merrill Bancroft was showing off a seldom seen Federal #145 purchased at the meet. Matt Kurzdorfer showed a rare Federal gooseneck horn and a very rare Federal #60 tuner. The tuner was first offered in 1922, before Federal made their

first complete radio. It contained no tubes, but could be used with the model 55, which contained two stages of RF amplification, followed by the #8 detector with one stage of audio. Matt also displayed Two Federal Pliophone horns and an extremely rare Mignon RCI, which was used by jewelers in 1922 to receive time signals. These items were not for sale--just for display.

The Seminars

There were a total of 14 seminars and I went to about ten of them. Most of the seminars had an attendance of over 100 people. All were very interesting and presented by speakers that were the top people in their fields. In the first seminar, directly following the mixer on Wednesday evening, Tom Perera told about Phil Weingarten and his remarkable fake artifacts.

Phil was a master craftsman with a dishonest streak. He often neglected to tell buyers of his repro objects that they were not originals. Once he told a widow that her husband wanted his valuable wireless objects to go to him, then went to her house and collected them. Since they had, in fact, been promised to the AWA, Bruce Kelley was infuriated and threw him out of the club!



Pete Yanczer gave his usual excellent presentation on early mechanical television early Thursday morning. The title was "Television 1928--What Was it Like?" His 32-line mirror screw display system produced a large 4"x5" bright picture which I was easily able to view from half way back in the audience.

The viewing angle was 150 degrees, so the entire audience was able to view the image head on from where they sat or by moving just a few feet. I know of no other TV display concept that can show you a full width image regardless of your location in the room. It can even display images in color!

About 40 people attended the AWA Member's Forum. President Geoff Bourne discussed the club's plans and gave the audience a chance to ask questions and give suggestions. A prime topic was the need to increase membership.



Geoff said that, this year, members of the ARRL were permitted to attend the conference without joining the AWA and that plans are being made for next year to extend this privilege to

other radio clubs. Geoff also said that more flea market table spaces were sold

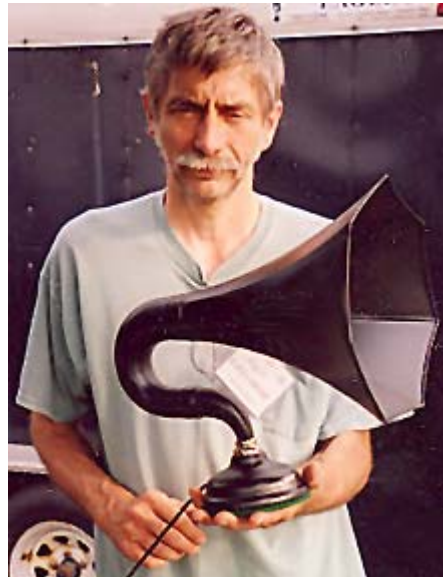
this year than last, which is encouraging.

A large group attended Brian Belanger's "A History of the Emerson Radio Corporation." He covered the entire period from start to finish, showing many product pictures.

Bart Lee gives an interesting talk at the AWA meet almost every year, generally on short-wave topics. However, this time he reviewed last year's replication of Marconi's 1901 transatlantic radio propagation tests. He did this in great detail, describing the many similarities in propagation between the two tests and comparing equipment power, equipment sensitivity, sunspot activity, etc. He concluded that Marconi really did send a radio message across the Atlantic in 1901.

"Moonlight restoration" was presented Thursday evening while other members took the bus to the AWA museum, 25 miles away. I attended both events and took pictures of our new museum building. Journal editor Marc Ellis hosted the restoration event along with column editor Ken Owens, Floyd Engels and Lane Upton. Each of the four briefly discussed a recent restoration project, and each talk was followed by informal audience discussion.

The "Pre 1912 Wireless and Electrical Apparatus" seminar was moderated by Felicia Kreuzer and Lauren Peckham. It was good to see Lauren back again this year. Ronald McClellan showed his beautifully restored circa 1880 demonstration electrical generator. He spent many hundreds of hours making and finishing the four horseshoe magnets and other missing parts. Lauren Peckham brought an extremely large late 1880's variometer. It was believed to be an experimental instrument from a science lab. Many interesting artifacts were shown, but no radios. There was an excellent response from the large audience.



"Television, A Life History" reviewed TV from its birth in the late 19th century to the present. It was presented by Dr. Alex Magoun, Executive Director of the David Sarnoff laboratory museum. The "Authors and Editors Get Together" seminar was hosted by AWA Journal Editor Marc Ellis, Journal column editors and AWA Review Editor, Bob Murray. Possible article topics and preparation procedures were discussed with current and prospective authors.

The Auction

The antique radio auction included paper items, tubes, hardware, radios and other equipment. The first two hours were devoted to tubes and paper items; the last three hours were devoted to radio artifacts. Sales amounted to about \$30,000. Rich Estes was the auctioneer again this year. Rich also conducts monthly

antique radio auctions from his headquarters south of Cleveland, Ohio.

I thought the auction prices were generally reasonable. For a report covering most of the sales, see the auction results elsewhere in this issue. The top price in the auction was an unbelievable \$1,900 for a Phil Weingarten replica Fleming valve! Next were \$1,600 for a Collins KWM380, \$1,500 for a "Ducretet spark coil," and \$1500 for a very nice bronze bust of Marconi.

In the radio auction, I thought that \$325 for a Federal 110, said to be complete and in good condition, was no more than half of its value. An AK model 10 breadboard with the tags and tubes brought \$700. Perhaps a bit light I thought. A Kennedy #281 receiver in VGC with tubes brought an even \$500. I wouldn't want to sell mine for that!

I thought that the 1920s wood cabinet cathedral and tombstone sets were selling for very low prices. A working Philco cathedral 60 only brought \$75; another 60, said to be good condition but not stated to be working, sold for \$45! A Crosley tombstone sold for \$65.



Perhaps auction attendance was a bit lower this year, and too bad for you if you missed the event! There were some very good bargains available. The delays with receiving auction payments in previous years did not happen this year. My check was delivered on August 29, four days after the event ended.

The Museum

The A.W.A. Electronic Communication Museum was open for visitors from 7 to 9pm Thursday and again 2 to 5 pm Sunday. The building that will be the museum's new home is now occupied by a group of antique dealers. It is right across the street from the present AWA annex, where many artifacts are stored, repaired and prepared for display. The new facility is much larger than our present museum display building. It also is handicap accessible.

The museum library is currently being transferred to "Building 2," an auxiliary structure behind "the main building." However, it will take a few years to transfer all of the items from the present museum and annex buildings. In the meantime the main building will continue to provide space to antique dealers.

A major advantage of the new location, I think, is that it is right on Routes 5 and 20 so we will be able to place a prominent sign right on our property. I anticipate that this will have a definite impact on both museum attendance and club membership.

Equipment Contest

Contest entries were solicited in 20 categories, and the resulting display of artifacts was spectacular, as always. To cite a few examples: John Dilks' very nice spark transmitter and nicely constructed home brew vacuum tube transmitters both won blue ribbons. Nice going, John!

The "Best of Show" ribbon was won by Ed Taylor with his DeForest spherical Audion display on a turntable. Congratulations, Ed! Steve Wallace won a blue ribbon in the horn speaker category for his very unusual "Best Pal" horn with two wooden bowl reflectors. I have never seen another like it.

Your Conference reporter won a blue ribbon in the "radios in disguise" category with his 1939 World's Fair RCA portable. This is not the radio usually associated with the fair. However, with the large Trylon and Persiphere on top it is surely of the period. In fact, it was introduced at the fair's RCA television exhibit. I actually attended this fair and was televised at the RCA exhibit.

Banquet and Luncheon

The annual awards banquet was preceded by a social hour. The banquet was held Friday evening and Mike Adams, the keynote speaker, presented a lively talk on Lee deForest. His aim was to dispel some of the myths that have grown up around this controversial inventor. The various AWA awards were presented and the winners in the Old Equipment Contest were announced. Following the dinner, the contest area was opened for viewing.

The always popular ladies' luncheon was held on Saturday, providing spouses with a function of their own to enjoy while husbands attended the auction.

The AWA Review

AWA Review Volume 20 was introduced at the conference Book Fair for a price of \$15.00. It contains ten very diversified articles on 230 pages. All are related to the conference theme "One Hundred Years of Electronic Communications." Included is your reporter's article, "First World War Aircraft Radio." He was invited to write this article after his exhibit on this topic won "Best of Show" at the 2006 conference. The Review is published annually. It generally contains longer articles, while the shorter ones appear in the quarterly *AWA Journal*.

In Closing

I come to this event every year, arriving early and leaving only after the very last event is over. Even though I have acquired some nice additions to my collection over the years, I really come for the socializing. I probably have more friends here than I do at home and it is very nice to renew those friendships every year. I hope to see you all at the conference next year!

In closing, I'd like to give special thanks to John Dilks, who edits the "Old Radio"

column for the ARRL publication QST. In the July and August issues he devoted a total of four pages to the history of AWA and a description of both the 2006 conference and the conference plans for 2007. QST has a circulation of about 120,000, so the articles should certainly draw many new members into our club. Thanks for your support, John!



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