

Southeastern
Antique
Radio
Society



FALL 1996

John Pelham Finds Radios in the Lone Star State

— or —

Have Radios Will Travel, Not Necessarily In That Order

by John Pelham

<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/w1ja/radios.htm>

I had two weeks of vacation time to use by the end of the year, and being insatiably interested in old radios, I thought that there'd be no better way to spend some of it than to attend a major radio meet. After asking around, I determined that the VRPS Convention in Texas was the meet to attend in the waning months of 1996. A \$162 round-trip airfare (vs. 14 hours of driving time each way) convinced me that flying was the proper choice, even though I was worried about how to get stuff home, should I end up buying something.

Briefly, the VRPS meet was set up like this: Two technical sessions on Friday afternoon, followed by a 30-minute silent auction (you walk around and write your bid on a form taped to each item), followed by a main auction of plastic radios. On Saturday, another 30-minute silent auction, followed by another main auction of wood radios and TVs. All of this activity took place at a Holiday Inn near the Dallas/Fort Worth airport.

I attended both technical sessions. The first was a basic presentation by a club member on aligning TRF and superheterodyne radios. The second was by John Bryant, author of The

Zenith Trans-Oceanic book. His presentation was on early radio manufacturing at Zenith. He covered the years from startup to 1929. We were treated to a slide show of early pictures of the Zenith factory. We also were shown a silent movie, made by Zenith as a promotional factory tour. Fascinating.

I was overwhelmed with the quantity and quality of the plastic radios offered in Friday's main auction. We had all day to preview the items as they were brought in throughout the day, so I wore my feet out examining everything and making my auction plans. Once the auction started, the auctioneer was competent and very entertaining, and processed the items at a furious pace. I estimate he took about 30 seconds per radio, but perhaps the time spent was even less. This auction lasted from 5 PM until about 10:30 PM, and at less than 30 seconds per item, you can see how many items were processed. It was mostly radios, although a few boxes of tubes, old military surplus items, advertising paraphernalia, etc., were intermixed.

The furious pace whipped me into a frenzy of acquisition. I bid not only on those items I had planned to bid on, but on a few additional items as well. The sheer speed of the auction process resulted in many true bargains for buyers. I bid on a few radios simply because I couldn't believe the prices. Nice Emerson midget bakelite table sets for \$15 to \$20? A classic Zenith early 50s AM/FM bakelite set in near perfect condition for \$25? I had to have 'em. At the high end of the price scale, I knew I would own the Firestone

Air Chief R-320 (1939 bakelite World's Fair set; awesome styling) as soon as I previewed it. I didn't know that someone else also wanted it almost as desperately. Just between the two of us, we pushed the bidding up to \$180 before he bowed out (whew!). After it was all over, I found I had bought nine radios, plus a stamped-metal repro "Hoppy" radio ad and a VRPS sweatshirt in the silent auction. There were lots of Trans-Oceanics, many of them excellent. This could have been my opportunity to start my T.O. collection, but the prices quickly escalated above \$100 on all the good ones, so I passed.

I wasn't the only one overwhelmed by the quantity of stuff. The auction staff was unable to keep up with the pace at times, and introduced some clerical errors into the computerized recordkeeping. My successful-bid print-out contained three errors. I was shown to have bought something I didn't bid on, one of my successful bids wasn't on the list, and a third item, while listed, was nowhere to be found physically, at least at first. A club staffer was very friendly and eager to help me, but it still took almost an hour to get my problems resolved. (On Saturday, I overheard another VRPS staffer say that they were on site to 3 AM reconciling other errors. Apparently I was fortunate to get out at midnight, central time, with my 11 items.)

Saturday's main auction was for wood radios. Quantity was high (although perhaps only 2/3 the previous day's quantity). Still, I'd never seen as many wood radios gathered in one place before. But quality, both in terms of the radios' physical condition and the selection of models available, was generally poor, in my opinion. There were a few exceptions, but quality wasn't the rule. The rotted, painted and polyurethaned wood was not pleasant to look at. (Only a few sets were this bad, but they stick in my mind.) Although I still consider myself primarily a collector of wood radios, I didn't find a thing of interest in the main auction. I was the successful bidder, at

\$5, for a transistor radio in Saturday's silent auction though.

On Sunday, the flea market was scheduled to run from 8 AM to noon. I arrived at 7 AM and found the market already underway at full strength. (Mental note: next time come even earlier.) The flea market was quite large (sized somewhere between Charlotte and Atlanta, I'd say), and the goods for sale were radios of all kinds, plus the normal tubes, parts, knobs, radio paraphernalia, etc. I saw many sets that didn't sell in the auctions, plus some that did. I bought three volumes from the Radios of the Baby Boom Era series, and three more transistor radios (what's happening to me — I'm supposed to want only wood radios!). By 10 AM, half the sellers had already left, and the flea market had pretty near fizzled out. Later that afternoon I walked by Ballrooms B, C and D; all traces of the 1996 VRPS Convention were gone, and I was just a tourist with a bunch of old radios in my hotel room. Radios that I had to find a way to get shipped to Atlanta!

The shipping process was a bit unnerving. A nearby pack-n-ship store said they'd be willing to pick me and my radios up and take us to the shipping store, where I could supervise the packing, or perform it myself. They said they'd call at 1 PM on Sunday, after the end of the flea market. They finally did, five hours late, to tell me that they had decided to wait until Monday because it was raining. I had been trying to reach them all afternoon when they didn't call me at the arranged time, becoming increasingly worried and frantic. On Monday, they did call, but couldn't provide any transportation. I hastily arranged transportation from the hotel, which got me to the shipping store, where I found it necessary to argue with them about packing and shipping methods (they won). Next time I'll drive.

I left Texas exhausted and satisfied. The scope and excitement of this whole affair was awesome, and I enjoyed myself immensely. For the most part, things were well run, especially considering the size and complexity of the affair. I will almost certainly return, for I have discovered that this is an event not to be missed. Next time I'll drive.

President's Page

I would like to share with all the members of SARS my pride and satisfaction with the results of our Fall Swap Meet and Radio Show. It was a great show in all respects and it was a real team effort. I hope that no one will be left of recognition, but I would like to start at the top with our past President, Charlie Milton, who provided the leadership to get the whole show conceptually organized. Then Vice President Bill Johnson took the show chairmanship to heart and really tied up all the details and made the whole plan come through. Charlie Pierce did a tremendous job with the administrative end of the show, and with Treasurer Larry Smith, they took care of the financial details and kept us out of debt. Barry Ethridge worked tirelessly to provide us with a first class display of Zenith radios and also a contest that was simply fantastic. I have seen other displays and contests at other big shows, but they were not as well done as ours. Thanks also to Marty Reynolds who provided us with a trusty and reliable antique P.A. system, and also for the contact with the Atlanta Radio Theater Company. Steve Davis provided us with our printed passes and materials, and many others gave of their time to help at the gate and to direct traffic. Again, it was a great team effort, and I feel that it showed that we are capable as a club to put on a first rate regional show. Shall we do it again next year? Let's hear from you as to how you feel about making this show an annual event.

As I look back in review of our show, several things come to mind that made it truly outstanding. First, the facility was just terrific. There was plenty of room for us both outdoors and inside and the contact person, Mrs. Roberta Williams, bent over backwards to help us in any way she could. She personally took care of the food service and provided us with tasty and economical meals. Secondly, the Atlanta Radio Theater company put on a very entertaining show for us that was certainly unique, and they expressed a willingness to work with us in any future shows. It could be a great drawing card for us. Third, the friendly spirit of all involved showed all of our out of town guests that they were welcome and they had nothing but the highest praise for our club.

I am very proud of our effort and I hope that we will continue to grow as a club, not only in numbers, but in the good spirit of friendship...Please arrange your monthly schedules so that you can join us on the second Monday of every month for our good meetings at the Piccadilly Cafeteria. Our show and tells have been terrific and the categories for the next three months are:

November - Radios that start with the letter "P"

December - Novelty radios

January - Radios that start with the letter "A"

Gordon Hunter



President

SOUTHEASTERN ANTIQUE RADIO SOCIETY MEGA-SWAPMEET OCTOBER 5-6, 1996 By Larry Smith

Although rain had been in the forecast for most of the week, October 5th and 6th gave us almost perfect weather for the Southeastern Antique Radio Society (SARS) Mega-Meet which was held at the North Atlanta Community Center. Everyone in attendance (approximately 60 vendors and 200 paid collectors) seemed to have a marvelous time. The flea market attracted and wide assortment of very high quality radios. Everything from catalins to Zenith and Midwest Consoles with an ample supply of tubes and parts. There seemed to be something for just about every radio taste. Undeniably one of the highlights of the weekend was a performance by the Atlanta Radio Theater Company. This theater group specializes in very authentic performances of "Golden Age" type radio productions. Also on the program was a seminar by Don Paterson (former editor of Radio Age). Don presented a very informative lecture on radio restoration. Barry Ethridge (SARS Member) put together an excellent club display of Zenith radios and advertising materials. This display included everything from a 1924 Zenith Suitcase Radio to a complete point of sale Zenith Transistor Display. It truly was one of the most complete collective Zenith displays that I've seen. The excitement of the flea market was intensified by several prize drawings. The grand prize drawing was for an Atwater Kent 808A Console in excellent condition which was won by John Pelham of Suwanee, Georgia. The radio contest brought together a varied selection of very nice and unusual sets. The peoples' choice award (which was the overall favorite radio among the eighteen categories of the contest plus the Zenith display) went to Rick Taylor for his Zenith 9S232 "Walton" Tombstone. As Bill Johnson (swap meet chairman) said, "the Atlanta meet can't currently be compared with the big meets in Elgin and Rochester. We just haven't been around long enough. However, Atlanta could very easily host a major event. Our central location should help facilitate it. We just need to provide the necessary planning and work". SARS has already begun making plans for next year. We hope to see each of you in Atlanta in 1997 for "Mega Meet II".

SCRIBBLES FROM THE SECRETARY

Joe Howell

It has been too long since I last included all of our members in a synopsis of our monthly minutes. I reached this conclusion several minutes before our new president (see Gordon's column elsewhere in this publication) approached me with just that suggestion - he and I must be on the same wavelength. The following is gleaned from my notes for the meeting which took place October 14, 1996 at the Picadilly Cafeteria. Picadilly Meeting Room - fifteen members attending. Gordon Hunter called the meeting to order 7:15 p.m. Discussed the options of a small Spring meet and a large Fall '97 meet. Steve D. asked for opinions on 2 day versus 1 day; Charles P. suggested possibility of 1/2 day on Friday and whole day Sat. Gordon H. mentioned newspaper coverage will be improved next Fall. Discussion include a smaller/less expensive location for the Spring meet - allowing for no admission fee.

Preliminary financial overview of last meet - approximately a breakeven; \$500 for building rental, \$500 for insurance (several gasps at this figure).

Bill J. reviewed he meet as very successful; learned much of logistics, advertising, etc.(personal aside - Bill did a phenomenal job chairing this one). Bill awarded Certificates of Special Appreciation to Committee members and volunteers Charles P., Barry E., Steve D., Larry S., Marty R., Wes B., Gordon H., Me, John P., Charles M., Johnny H., Norm S., Dave R., and Blake H.

Norm S. to continue as newsletter publisher; Barry to swap editing duties with Charles P.

Themes for the next two meeting were decided upon: November will be "P" month (Philco, etc.); December will be "novelty" month. Show and Tell entries this month were for "My Favorite Radio":

Admiral 7TO9-X, 19?? - John Pelham GE A70, 1935 Tombstone - Dan Five Sided Cord, "Mirror Deco" - Barry Etheridge RCA 1X50, 1948? - Dave Robinson Detrola 100, 1935/36 - Larry Smith GE "Turban" Bakelite - Steve Davis Tower Cone Speaker "Castle" - Steve Davis "Brer Rabbit" album - Marty Reynolds Grunow Deco, 1933 - Gordon Hunter Silvertone 7024, Bakelite - Gordon Hunter

Gordon H. adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:30 p.m.

note: any questions and/or suggestions gratefully received - see my telephone number listed elsewhere in this letter. thx jh

Support your club!

Meetings each second monday of the month at Picadilly Cafeteria, Holbomb Bridge Road, Norcross, GA. 6:30 P.M.

Classified Ads

Free to SARS members

WANTED: Original knobs for 1950 Emerson 636A ac/dc table radio (see Bunis 3rd edition, page 75). Zenith 1937 10-tube chassis (#1004, as used in 10S130, etc.), any condition. Zenith S4419 antenna coil and S4420 detector coil for 1937 #1004 chassis. 25L6G and 25Z6G vacuum tubes. John Pelham, 1185 Bend Creek Trail, Suwanee, GA 30174. (770) 476-0473.

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