



May 2011



### ***A NOTE FROM DEE***

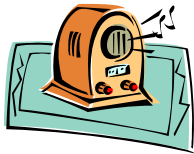
This month I would like to briefly talk about our library, and what better way to start than tell you a little about our new librarian, Reggie Olsen. Reggie is an expert on early communications receivers, an avid amateur radio operator, and a world traveler. Reg told me that there is nothing he would rather do than to spend time in our wonderful library. And while there, he spends most of his time sorting all the books and magazines, and getting them on the proper shelves. He is well under way in his new task and things are really looking up. Please come by any Saturday morning after 0900 hrs. and check it out.

Speaking of checking it out, I brought a book home today from the library named "A Pictorial History of Radio" by Irving Settel. Copyrighted in 1960, it begins in the really early days, say in 1794, when Claude Chappe mounted semaphores on high towers for visually passing messages from one point to another. As the book progresses through the years, we hear about people like Samuel Morse, Alexander Graham Bell, Marconi, Hertz, and on and on. And this is just the first chapter!

What really interested me was that most of the book is dedicated to the Golden Age of Radio. Starting in the 1920's and finishing up in the late 50's, there are hundreds of pictures of all your favorite radio personalities. This book is sure to spark a few memories out of those old gray heads out there. This book is just one of over a thousand books that are available for checking out and reading. When Reg gets all the books sorted and on the shelves, we will begin the laborious task of getting the database updated. When we finish up, you will be able to browse our library through our internet site.

*Dee Haynes*

243-4630 or [k4hfx@bellsouth.net](mailto:k4hfx@bellsouth.net)



## **LISTEN TO THE RADIO!!**

Hello folks,

The Golden Age of Radio is still alive and well in the Haynes household, even though I am the only one that listens. But, without fail, each and every night of the week, I find myself going down memory lane. I hit the pause button on my iPod, and immediately I am greeted by the friendly ring of an old crank wall phone. Then I hear a voice, “By Grannies Abner, I believe that’s our ring.” “I Dogies, Lum I believe you’re right. I’ll see, “Hello, Jot’em down store, this is Lum and Abner.” I’ve heard them many times before, but I still enjoy hearing them again. You know, it’s been a while since I heard Henry Aldridge. Maybe I’ll add him to the list of evening shows.

If you would like to listen to some of these old classics, just bring in a thumb drive or a blank CD and make copies of any shows that we have in our library.

These shows are in MP3 format, and you can get around 100 shows on a single CD, or several hundred on a thumb drive.

See you in the funny papers,

*Dee Haynes*

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## **NOTE FROM DAVE CISCO**

The article below is the second part of a three-part article for the newsletter, which was written by well-known author and photographer, Joe Veras. Joe has written several books, written for **CQ** and **QST** Magazines, and is on the ARRL publishing staff. He recently produced a calendar of old radios for ARRL and included a Tuska radio that AHRs owns. I am proud to have him contribute to our newsletter.

### **JAMES MILLEN – Part Two**

By Joe Veras, K9OCO

When we left James Millen in Part One of this series, it was 1927 and the National Company had just hired him as General Manager and Chief Engineer at its plant in Malden, Massachusetts.

Incorporated early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, National initially manufactured a wide range of products, including components for electrical power plants, household items, and toys. The original corporation was known as The National Toy Company. With the boom of Radio broadcasting during the “Roaring 20s,” National entered that market by manufacturing variable capacitors for Cardwell, whose own production capability could not keep up with the demand.

National’s first radio product line consisted of broadcast band sets for the consumer market, but that changed dramatically with Millen’s arrival. He continued developing the BC TRF sets but also began designing regenerative shortwave receivers.

First off the drawing board was the SW-2, a two-tube (un-tuned RF amp + regenerative-detector) set of simple chassis and panel construction. It was produced without setting up any formal production machinery at the National Company’s new Sherman Street plant in Malden, Massachusetts. A third audio amplifier tube was eventually added to the design. Other regenerative sets followed: the SW-4, SW-5, SW-45, and SW-58. The naming convention at National used a number designating either the number of tubes in the set or the type of tube in the audio amplifier. The famous SW-3, one of the company’s longest-lived products, was an SW-5 minus two audio amplifier tubes – an effort to reduce the receiver’s price during the Great Depression.

Next Millen took on the design and production of a superhet receiver for the Civil Aeronautics Administration (forerunner of the FAA). In the early days of the airline industry, communication between aircraft and ground was on HF. Both the government and airlines needed a receiver for the ground station end of this link. Millen’s answer was the National AGS (for *Aeronautical Ground Station*). The high-performance receiver, introduced in 1933, covered 1.5 through 20 MHz with plug-in coils and had a 500 kHz I.F. Band spread coils were available for amateur use, as was an optional crystal filter.

More than a year later, the receiver considered Millen’s masterpiece and National’s trademark appeared. Promised and hinted at in the closing months of 1934, the HRO did not come to market until the spring of 1935. Succeeding variations remained on the scene another 30 years. For all that run it retained the wonderful PW dial and followed Millen’s maxim that a high-performance receiver must use plug-in coils. Until 1950, all HROs employed an external power supply, another Millen philosophy designed to chase the twin demons of heat and hum-producing components from the main receiver cabinet.

As he continued product development at National in the mid-1930s, Millen kept quality in mind. Not everything could be top-of-the-line, neither the amateur nor short wave hobby markets would support that, but he believed in giving the customer value for money he paid. He believed in staying on top of component quality control by setting up machinery for their production in-house. As a side benefit, this also gave National another profit center in the sale of components.

During the second half of the 1930s, more Millen-inspired products appeared in National's catalog. The next installment will look at some of those as well as the events that hastened his departure from the company.

## ***MEETING TIMES***

We meet nearly every Saturday of the month at 09:00 AM in the one-story building at the corner of 8th Avenue North and 18th Street (1801 8th Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203). Use the rear (Southeast) entrance.

**Come to the Monday Night Meetings, TOO, on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month at 7 PM!**

## ***FREE ELECTRONICS CLASSES***

The first Saturday of the month, there are electronics classes free to members. Topics include test equipment, Resistors and Capacitance testing, Inductors and coil winding, to name only a few subjects!

We hope to see you there!



Our next class date will be May 21, 2011, since Robert has some other activities on his schedule.



***DUES ARE NOW DUE***

Membership dues are \$25 a year, payable beginning in January. If you have questions about your dues, you can contact Tom at 205-967-7000.

**Dues can be mailed to AHRS @ P.O. Box 131418, Birmingham AL 35213.**

## ***WHO TO CONTACT***

**President – Dee Haynes**

243-4630

k4hfx@bellsouth.net

**Member and Instructor – Robert Frye**

205.631.6680

RLF100243@aol.com

**Web site – Bob Lovell**

bob@dixiwebdesigns.com

**Web Address:**

<http://alhrs.org>

**E-mail Address:**

ahrs2000@gmail.com

**Newsletter – Patsy Desaulniers**

patwrite@gmail.com