

The Jersey Broadcaster

NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW JERSEY ANTIQUE RADIO CLUB



October 2007

Volume 13 Issue 10



MEETING/ ACTIVITY NOTES

Reported by Marv Beeferman

THE ON-LINE BROADCASTER

The New Jersey Broadcaster is now on line. To date, 80 of your fellow NJARC members have subscribed, saving the club some \$1,400 per year. Interested? Send your e-mail address to:

mbeeferman@cs.com Be sure to include your full name!

At the September meeting, the club was treated to a great tech-talk on getting the best out of our antenna system. The highlight of the talk was Al's explanation of the

advantages of the 4:1 choke balun and how to construct it. Al noted that a balun transformer will improve the impedance match between antenna and coax, keep noise on the cable shield out of the antennaground circuit, can be used to couple coax to a receiver, covers both the MF and HF ranges and will eliminate static build-up.

The September meeting also featured a nice mini-auction arranged by Ray Chase. These auctions provide many of our members who can't travel to the major meets with a chance to take part in some of the

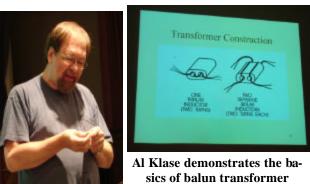
action. Sometimes, we don't see all the behind-the-scenes work that goes into arranging them, and Ray Chase and your Board of Directors should take a lot of credit for their investment of time and muscle.

Ray reports that we just successfully completed the second National Broadcasters Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony for which we had done quite a bit of new work in the museum. (*The material for this event missed press time, but we'll have a full report next month...Ed.*) Now the bigMEETING NOTICE

The next meeting of the NJARC will take place on Friday, October 12th, at 7:30 PM at the David Sarnoff Library in Princeton, NJ. Contact President Phil Vourtsis at (732)-446-2427 or visit us at http://www.njarc.org for directions. We've scheduled a show-and-tell with an RCA theme for this month, and what better place to show off your favorite radio, record player, TV or other RCA collectable than the David Sarnoff Library! We'll also asking all Board members to show up at 6:30 for a business meeting prior to the regular meeting.

gest and most successful InfoAge event is quickly upon us, the Haunted Hotel tour. This was a smashing success last year and this year has been expanded to three weekends on Friday and Saturday evenings from 7 PM to 11 PM. The dates are October 12, 13, 19, 20, 26 and 27. The NJARC part is the "Mad Science Lab" (enrpnr@erols.com) with whatever dates you can assist. This is a lot of fun and major way to advertise what we have.

Also, with Halloween drawing nigh, it's time once again for the David Sarnoff Library's *War of the Worlds*. The reenactment will take place on Saturday, October 27th in a matinee at 2 p.m., and an evening performance at 7:30



sics of balun transformer construction.

that was a huge hit last year. This event is a big fund raiser and profits are shared with participating groups commensurate with the support they provide. This year our Mad Science Lab will be in the "Hands-On" room that has been temporarily relocated. We really need three people every evening to man this endeavor; an operator, a guide and a dummy to play the body "brought back to life." We are in the process of putting the equipment together and need to have your help to man the display. Please get back to Ray p.m. It will be staged by the Hunterdon Radio Theatre's veteran cast and broadcast over 16 antique radios provided by the club. Bring your working, mid-1930's radios to the October meeting to play your part in this great event. As an added treat, acclaimed thereminist Kip Rosser will accompany electronic musicians Gregg Waltzer and Howard Moscovitz of the *Martian Radio Orchestra* for a half hour of appropriate mood music. Hundreds of people of all

ages flocked to last year's shows, so don't miss out...tickets do move fast! Contact http://www.davidsarnoff.org for ticket information.

Vice President Richard Lee has made another great effort to pull together our Fall swapmeet next month at the Parsippany PAL building. Let's give Richard and our club our full support of this event. Reservation information is provided in this month's *Broadcaster;* this is a very convenient and comfortable venue and I guarantee you'll enjoy it.

October 2007

THE JERSEY BROADCASTER is the newsletter of the New Jersey Antique Radio Club (NJARC) which is dedicated to preserving the history and enhancing the knowledge of radio and related disciplines. Dues are \$20 per year and meetings are held the second Friday of each month.

The Editor or NJARC is not liable for any other use of the contents of this publication.

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RADIO DAYS

By Harriet May Savitz

Did you ever wonder if "civilians" have the same love of that magical box that we do? Based on this article found in the Crossroads section of the Asbury Park Press (Sept. 16, 2007), it appears that at least one of them shares a common friend, one who might also travel with us from room to room throughout the day ...Ed

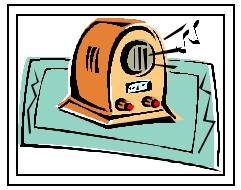
There are radios in every room of my house. I like old fashioned ones with two knobs - one to turn it on and choose the volume, the other to select the station. I do not need more than that.

One radio is in the kitchen, one in my bedroom, one in the guest room, one in the living room. Many times they are all working, so that when I walk from room to room, my radio friends travel with me. Those who live inside my radio become my company. Though I cannot see them as they speak, I imagine their faces, their expressions. I do not wish to know more about them than what I hear from their voices. While invisible, they can become what I wish them to be. Some might be very unattractive to the eye, but I do not realize this and often hope I will not discover them on television when the mystery will disappear. It is the voice that intrigues me, reaching out as if I am the only listener.

There is something intimate about listening to a radio. I do not feel that way about my television set. Rather, I feel I am just one of the gang, a fleck among the masses. In fact, it makes me feel quite expendable, as if there are 1,000 to **e**place me if I turn off the set. Television does not encourage my imagination. But the radio encourages me to be in partnership with it. Together, we can shape the program. However it is delivered to me, I have the opportunity to create the people behind the voices whatever way I wish. It is in my power to embellish them with youth or strength or beauty.

The radio has always offered my imagination the opportunity to soar. I grew up shuddering when listening to

"The Shadow." We would cut short a Sunday afternoon ride to return home for a radio show - it was that important to the family, even more important than getting ice cream. My father had a favorite ice cream shop one hour away and we would drive there on Sundays. But often he would ask the time and then say, "We'd better hurry up if you want to hear 'The Shadow.' " Of course, we all knew he wanted to hear it also. There was just one radio those many years ago, a large one in the center of the living room. And only one program available at a time. So there had to be a lot of give and take and negotiating. "The Shadow" always received a unanimous vote.



Later in life, when an illness confined me to bed, it would be the radio that would rescue me, save me from boredom and isolation.

But now it is so much better. I have many radios and many stations. There are fewer people in my immediate life to enjoy them with me, but my radios do not care how many are listening. They are undemanding and they do not need me to sit still while listening to them. I can do the dishes, clean the house, attend to chores or close my eyes while they speak to me. They are quite content to offer me the news, talk, music and sometimes drama. I do not need to sit in a chair and stare with full attention. We are like an old couple who are quite content to share as many hours as possible with each other in full understanding.

Sometimes at night, when I cannot sleep, I reach out in the dark and turn the dial to a favorite radio station. The room is no longer silent, the hours no longer lonely. The night loses its bleakness as I am swept away by the creativity coming from the radio.

It plays for me as if I am the only one.

A VISIT TO BLONDER TONGUE

By Phil Vourtsis

I received a phone call from Ben Tongue last week. He was moving out of his office at the Blonder Tongue location in Old Bridge. Even though the company was sold in 1989, Ben maintained an office and acted as a consultant all these years since 1989. I asked him if he ever had any regrets selling the company in 1989. His reply was "No, the business has gotten way too complicated."

Ben showed Sal Brisindi and I the business side of the building which is 25 thousand square feet. We were impressed with the many lab and test areas for the engineers and designers. Next, Ben brought us to his office to show us what he had available for the club. Ben is donating numerous boxes of vacuum tubes and data manuals. Ben was also throwing

out notes and letters he had written

through the years. It was like being a fly

on the wall looking through some of the

documents and seeing how the company

had to deal with the usual problems that

arise, like patents, adequate stocking of

needed components and keeping the size

of the company right for the amount of

jects in his office. Under his desk was the

first project he had completed in his ca-

reer. It was a sonic analyzer designed in

1948. Then there was a vintage working

RCA Radiola from the early 1920s with

optional model 104 amplified speaker.

In another area, Ben demonstrated a

working Edison Diamond Disc equipped

with optional attachment to play "long

point Ben was down on his knees with

Sal and I hunting through some of the

documents. I hope I can do that when I

reach Ben's age. Then Ben jumped up

and wanted to show us the production

area of the plant. Sal and I had to work at

I couldn't help but notice that at one

There were a few other interesting ob-

work that needed to be done.

playing" diamond discs.

keeping up with Ben's pace.

When he opened the doors to the production area, Sal and I stopped in our tracks. There was 100,000 square feet of space that seemed to go on forever.

To remain competitive, some of the production is now done overseas but some products are still made here. The company is still a leader in antenna design but now also sells preamplifiers, TVRO antennas, LNB's and associated hardware along with many other broadband products.

One of the BT employees collects vintage BT equipment. A shelf in his office displayed an "Antensifier" along with other oldies but goodies.

Ben has never been afraid of new technology and has embraced the internet. He has a wonderful and very informative web page at http://www.bentongue.com.

The NJA RC is very fortunate to have both Ben Tongue and Ike Blonder as club members. Not only has their company been good for New Jersey, but their expertise and wonderful stories have educated many club members at our meetings. It is a delight to share their experiences with us.

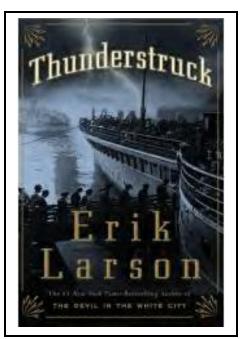


BOOK REVIEW

THUNDERSTRUCK: MARCONI AND THE MURDERER

While shopping at my local ShopRite, I came across a book whose cover immediately caught my attention. It showed passengers boarding a 1900's steamer with a huge lightning strike in the background; the scene was framed in a gold rectangle with electrical bolts in each corner typically found in early wireless and radio ads. When I read the liner notes, I was hooked:

"In Thunderstruck, Erik Larson tells the interwoven stories of two men - Hawley Crippen, a very unlikely murderer, and Guglielmo Marconi, the obsessive creator of a seemingly supernatural means of communication - whose lives intersect during one of the greatest criminal chases of all time."



I found Thunderstruck to be an electrifying book that stayed riveting from beginning to end. The story is so dramatic and so well told that I would pause between chapters because I didn't want it to conclude so quickly. As in his previous bestseller that some NJARC readers may be familiar with, "The Devil In the White City," Larson seeks that strange intersection between crime and science that occurred around 1900.

Larson seems fascinated by the overreaching ambition of one of the book's two central characters, Guglielmo Marconi, an over-achiever of the first-degree. We all know Marconi as the person generally credited as the inventor of wireless telegraphy. But Larson's Marconi struggles against disbelieving skeptics, competing inventors, unfavorable weather conditions, poor financial planning and a technology that he "discovers" but does not completely understand. The second protagonist is a scam artist and a murderer with a character that stands in sharp contrast to that of the celebrated inventor. Hawley Harvey Crippen is a small and petty man hounded by his larger, louder and insufferable wife, a flamboyant but domineering woman.

Hawley Crippen was an American doctor - or at least what passed for a doctor in those days. At age 30, he fell for a 17 -year-old patient whose theatrical ambitions led her to change her name to Belle Elmore. Belle would become known as a high-speed blonde, too fast for Crippen, a meek, mild man whose most notable features were his weak and watery eyes.

In 1897, Crippen's patent medicine company sent him to England to manage its London affairs. His wife resisted the move and lingered awhile in the U.S., presumably to pursue her operatic amb itions but probably to pursue romantic ones as well.

Meanwhile, a year earlier, 21-year-old Marconi, who "possessed the shrewd demeanor of a businessman twice his age," also immigrated to London. There, at the center of the commercial world, Marconi hoped to use friendly patent laws to protect the rudimentary devices he had invented in Italy for wireless telegraphy. Although scientists understood the theory behind wireless far better than Marconi, none possessed his ceaseless drive to experiment and perfect. Marconi's lack of a traditional scientific education, particularly his ignorance of physics, worked to his advantage. No material was untried, no configuration for his stations ignored, no amount of electrical energy underestimated as Marconi tried every possible permutation and combination to get his signals to travel farther and better, both day and night.

This single-mindedness was a trait that tested his investors, offended his competitors and estranged his wife. Scientists at the time referred derisively to inventors such as Marconi as "practicians." Oliver Lodge, who was particularly disdainful of Marconi (for ethical reasons as much as scientific ones), had a far more advanced understanding of radio waves, but far less discipline. He flitted from the study of radio waves to the possibilities of communicating with the dead and ended up succeeding with neither.

As Marconi comes closer to success, Crippen comes closer to killing Belle. After he meets a young female typist at work named Ethel Le Neve, and as Belle develops new liaisons for herself at home, Crippen comes to the conclusion that things would be a lot better without her. His standing as a medical man allows him to purchase an exotic poison, hyoscine hydrobromide, from a chemical supplier without question. Ultimately, Belle is poisoned and "sectioned" and her remains buried in the basement. Although Belle comes to a gruesome end, Larson tells the tale of Crippen and his new lover with an almost heartbreaking poignancy.

The fates of all of the key players in this story cross when Crippen and Ethel attempt to escape from Antwerp to Quebec City. The perceptive captain of their ship, the SS Montrose, suspects that Ethel, dressed as a man and masquerading as Crippen's son, isn't male at all. His use of the ship's Marconi equipment allows Scotland Yard to give chase on a faster ship, overtake the Montrose and ultimately intercept the unsuspecting couple.

The pursuit also allows the press to go into a feeding frenzy, with newspapers far and wide reporting the chase while the fugitives remain isolated on board the Montrose. The author evokes an almost Hitchcock-like tension as wireless transmissions fly back and forth. Newspaper readers all over the world, already captivated by the story, can read about what Crippen has eaten at meals, what jokes he told and listened to, all while Crippen himself has no idea that his lover's disguise has been penetrated. "Mysterious voices nowadays whisper across (the sea)," a reporter writes. "Invisible hands stretch out upon it; viewless fingers draw near and clutch and hold there." Wireless technology would continue to shows its value in catching criminals, and with, as Marconi might say, increasing frequency.

Thunderstruck is not historical fiction (although most of Marconi's advances took place almost a decade before Crippen cut up his wife and distributed the parts). For the most part, the stories (backed by a meticulous set of footnotes and a complete bibliography) are taken painstakingly from the newspapers, diaries, public files and other records of the day. In this book, you will learn about the British cultural biases that made Marconi's work difficult, as well as of Marconi's own obsessive, secretive, anti-social and egoistical temperament that more than once nearly derailed his venture. You'll be taken to Poldhu Station in Wales and to the North American stations on windswept Cape Cod and isolated, frigid Newfoundland. You'll accompany Marconi and his crew as they toil for months to set up the absurdly overpowered equipment that sent (or did it?) the series of "dits" that demo nstrated Marconi's ability to send signals across the Atlantic. You'll experience the first breaking of "The Great Hush" and the greater loneliness that enveloped the world prior to the advent of long-range telegraphy and radio. You'll also be follow the intimate details of the lives of mousy Dr. Crippen, his diva of a wife and their circle of theatrical friends. You'll learn a bit about homeopathy and allopathy, and learn how these "sciences" used lethal substances to treat disease. Throw in a few inspectors from Scotland Yard, a wily and discreet sea captain, pompous British scientists, an abandoned wife and a pre-WWI German spy, and you have the making of a fascinating reading experience.



FARNSWORTH ON BROADWAY

By Marv Beeferman

Since this issue of the Broadcaster is in a cultural mode with only the third book review in its history, the theme continues with some great news for NJARC "TV heads" - yes, Philo T. Farnsworth is coming to Broadway! The "Farnsworth Invention" begins previews at the Music Box Theatre (239 West 45th Street) on October 15th and the show's website (www.farnsworthonbroadway.com) introduces the play with this grabber:

"It's 1929. Two ambitious visionaries race against each other to invent a device called 'television.' Separated by two thousand miles, each knows that if he stops working, even for a moment, the other will gain the edge. Who will unlock the key to the greatest innovation of the 20th century: the ruthless media mogul, or the self-taught Idaho farm boy? The answer comes to compelling life in The *Farnsworth Invention...*"



Playwright Aaron Sorkin

The drama script was originally written as a screenplay and purchased by New Line Cinema in 2004; it was to be directed by Thomas Schlamme. The picture has yet to be produced but it was rewritten as a play when it was found to be better suited to the stage. It originally ran from February to March 2007 at the La Jolla Playhouse in California and one of the co-producers is none other than Steven Spielberg (so don't be surprised to see it as a feature film sooner or later).

The Broadway production crew and cast look quite impressive. It's written by playwright Aaron Sorkin, creator and writer of "The West Wing," who makes his return to Broadway with his first play in almost two decades ("A Few Good Men"). Hank Azaria of "Spamalot" and "The Simpsons" fame plays David Sarnoff and Jimmi Simpson, a New Jersey native, plays Farnsworth. Set design is by Klara Zieglerova who was the scenic designer for "Jersey Boys." Some of the numerous characters are immediately recognizable; Lizette Sarnoff, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Vladmir Zworykin, Mina Edison and Pem Farnsworth.

The September 9th New York Times took note of the building interest in the play, heralding the show as this coming season's equivalent of the highly acclaimed Frost/Nixon:

"The most notable entry in the field... comes from the television writer Aaron Sorkin...The subject speaks to Mr. Sorkin's fascination with process, with the conflict centering on the feud between a particularly gifted young student, Philo T. Farnsworth, who invented the first electronic television system in the 1920s (not quite true; Farnsworth used a mechanical display for his image dissector based on Baird's early work...Ed) and David Sarnoff, who, from that seed, fertilized a media empire. Both men had utopian visions for television's potential, but the play deals as well with all the quotidian matters beyond the scope of their idealism: patent law and economics, science and the repercussions of the Wall Street crash."

Of course, the linking of the word "Invention" with Farnsworth will make many TV historians cringe. The Jolia Playhouse production elicited just such a response and when the play hits a more technically sophisticated New York audience, a much greater din can be expected. Depending who you listen to, based on comments from the Jolia Playhouse production, Sarnoff doesn't come off too bad, but it looks like Philo gets the better of the deal. Farnsworth's great nephew, Ronnie, who was at the California open-

"But it's a testament to the writing that it's the first time I've ever seen Sarnoff as a sympathetic character. He emigrated from Russia, on the run from the Cossacks who burned down his family's house, taught himself English, and became the head of one of the most powerful corporations in the world. True, he was a cast-iron son of a bitch, but there is something admirable in the sheer determination and force of will that required. And there was something of the idealist in him, too - he really thought TV would change the world for the better, and hated commercials, even though they brought in revenue."

"Without Philo, we never would have had television. But it's because of Sarnoff, for better or worse, that we have what we now call TV."

"(Farnsworth) naively shows his invention to Vladimir Zworykin, who promptly copies it for RCA - and the look of betrayal on (Farnsworth) face is heart-breaking."



Farnsworth and Zworykin (La Jolla Playhouse production)

Another playgoer, a little less biased, had this to say:

"Great acting and stage play. BUT then I went home and started researching Philo's life. Wow, it's like the play was a total lie. At the end of the play we get a monologue of what 'really happened to Philo' and it doesn't match anything I've read. According to the play, Philo lost the patent suit, never did anything else intellectually, became depressed and an alcoholic and died in obscurity. But in reality, Philo actually won the patent suit, made a million dollars off royalties, created more electronic devices and then worked with ITT making advances in fusion research."

Unfortunately, Hank Azaria, who plays Sarnoff in the Broadway production, seems to have been brainwashed by the play's director. In a short interview in August's New York magazine:

Q: You're always so likeable in your performances - is it going to be a challenge to play a bad guy?

A: My good friend Oliver Platt gave me this advice: "Even though you're playing a dick, you got to play the role like you're making the case before Gd why you deserve to be in Heaven." So I don't see myself as the bad guy, like, at all.



Writer and Broadway cast with Hank Azaria center.

It looks like The Farnsworth Invention might be one of the most anticipated openings of the coming Broadway season (at least for us techno-nerds) and I am looking forward to see the play later in the month. Perhaps it will hold the same interest for other NJARC members; it would make a great discussion topic at a future meeting. But some friendly advice to our club TV mavens Dave Sica and Alex Magoun; no tomatoes or rotten eggs allowed in the theatre, no matter what kind of target Farnsworth makes!

SATURDAY IN KUTZTOWN

By Dave Sica

DVHRC's meet at Kutztown seems to keep getting bigger and better. I left the house in time to arrive by 7:00 AM on Saturday, yet I arrived to find a scene already bustling with activity. Granted, more than a couple of the tables were still covered with tarps; I hear that some of the partying went on pretty late on Friday night. But most vendors were already busy, if a bit bleary eyed, greeting the collectors who began streaming in shortly after sunrise!

Kutztown has evolved into a full two day event. In fact, it seems to have turned into a big sleepover party. I was told that several folks arrived on Thursday evening in order to be set up for the start of the festivities on Friday. I keep saying that I've got to hit Kutztown on Friday and maybe next time I will. There are motels nearby and lots of on-site camping space, but a number of collectors evidently feel that the back seat of their car provides for adequate lodging. I think I'd be more enthusiastic about that a few decades ago! And a few hardy souls apparently even camped out under the stars (well, under the roof of the pavilion anyway.)

The weather was "perfect" in that it wasn't too hot or too cold. Although it did rain fairly hard for a brief spell on Saturday morning, and then drizzled for a while after that, it turned nice and sunny for the rest of the day. After the cloudburst it surprised me to see radios sitting in pools of water on the tables and tarps of those vendors who set up outside the pavilion. Many seemed to have gotten caught a bit by surprise by the rain. But it puzzled me to see more than one or two folks set up outside who left their radios, literature, tube boxes and what have you lying uncovered out in the drizzle. Lots of things got pretty well soaked and I can't imagine that rust or mildew didn't ensue. Go figure!

Anyone who has been attending the Kutztown meet for more than a couple of years probably remembers the really bad food of years past. This is the year that really GOOD food has been available and it makes all the difference in the world for

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those staying throughout the day not to go hungry (or, as in the past, to wish they had!)

There was a good variety of interesting junque on display: not too much really early stuff this time, although there was some. There were many radios of all vintages and types in conditions ranging from fully-restored sets to restoration projects to parts. There was a significant amount of audio equipment and a smattering of TV stuff. There were even some nice jukeboxes. I spoke with a couple of collectors who managed to find something special at this meet that they had been long seeking and left very happy! Me, I just bought a couple of "half price" wet radios from one of the outside vendors.

The club also raffled off a fully restored radio as they've done before. This was a big hit with the attendees, especially to new collectors and members of the general public who drifted in. The club also runs a repair station offering free radio repairs at the meet, and a very large auction of interesting items (and also a large amount of drek) at the end of the meet. One interesting twist to this auction is that you get a raffle ticket with your bid paddle. At the end of the auction, one number is picked and if the person with the winning number has stayed until the bitter end, they win \$25. (And you'll find that towards the end of this auction \$25 could buy a very large amount of stuff!)









New Jersey Antique Radio Club's — FALL SWAP MEET —



Parsippany PAL Building Smith Field Route 46 & 33 Baldwin Road Parsippany, New Jersey 07054



Saturday, November 3rd, 2007

Walk around auction starts at 11:30 am. Bring in your attic treasures for free appraisal!

Open to the Public

(8:00 am to 1:00 pm)

Vendor Set-Up at 7:00 am

\$5.00 ENTRANCE FEE

CLUB DONATION



Expert Antique Radio Repair Available. Refreshments Available. Easy ground level access.

(70) 8 ft. Tables \$20.00 for members \$25.00 for non-members Reserved Additional Tables \$15.00 At the Door \$20.00

FOR DIRECTIONS VISIT OUR WEBSITE: WWW.NJARC.ORG OR MAPQUEST. (33 Baldwin Rd., Parsippany, NJ 07054)

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