

The Jersey Broadcaster

NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW JERSEY ANTIQUE RADIO CLUB

December 2009

Volume 15 Issue 12



**MEETING/
ACTIVITY
NOTES**

Reported by Marv Beeferman

THE ON-LINE BROADCASTER

The New Jersey Broadcaster is now on-line. To date, 97 of your fellow NJARC members have subscribed, saving the club over \$1900 a year. Interested? Send your e-mail address to:

mbeeferman@cs.com

Be sure to include your full name.

The nor'easter that re-arranged the South Jersey shoreline also tempered the turnout for November's meeting. However, considering the weather, we had a good showing of foul-weather friends. The Old Equipment Contest took a hit, though; entries were limited to about three so we decided to re-schedule the contest until next year.

Al Klase managed to access his web site and give us a preview of the upcoming BCB DX contest. The rules are published in this month's *Broadcaster*. If you go to <http://www.njarc.ar88.net/contest.html> (or the NJARC web site) you'll find log sheets, a station list, distances, tips on DX'ing, instructions for building loop antennas and links to some helpful websites. You'll also find some great videos documenting Al's success in pulling in both local and distant stations.

This year, it would be nice if some photos could be captured with contestants at the radio helm. (If you're up past midnight, better use the red-eye reduction feature of your camera.) Camera shy? - a nice photo of your rig would suffice.

Richard Lee distributed copies of an article from the March 2009 *Popular Communications* titled "Ultralight Dxing Goes Loopy." It notes that the growing popularity of AM broadcast-band Dxing with ultralight radios has spurred a renewed interest in loop antenna experimentation. If



NOTICE (NO MEETING)

HOLIDAY PARTY AT INFOAGE!
SATURDAY, DEC. 12

Hope you made reservations for our Holiday Party. The fun begins at Info-Age's Marconi Hotel dining room at 5:00 PM with a non-alcoholic cocktail hour and continues with a delicious Italian buffet at 6:15. If you changed your mind at the last minute, we might have some openings left - e-mail me at mbeeferman@cs.com and we'll see if we can fit you in. Dress is casual and please remember your "Mystery Grab Bag" gift. Also remember (and you know who you are) that there is no meeting on Friday !

you're thinking about entering the "light-weight" category of the NJARC BCB DX contest, you might want to get a copy of this article and try your hand at building a spiderweb ultralight loop. As an added feature, the loop is environmentally friendly, using recycled plastic and salvaged electronic parts

brew made from Fada parts, an Aeriola Sr. amplifier and a nice Ozarka battery set. You'll find photos of some of the action in this month's *Broadcaster*.

As reported in the December *Tube Collector*, the December issue of *QST* will carry NJARC member John Dilks' 120th "Vintage Radio" column. As editor Sibley states: "This is a remarkable record of service, with a great variety of writing from original historical sources. John deserves congratulations for this feat!" John reports that he has also added something new to his web site (www.k2tqn.com/); 72 of his columns indexed from January 2000 through December 2005. Just go to the site, click on the yellow box and it will take you directly to the indexed pages.

In this month's *Broadcaster*, you'll find an article describing Thomas Edison's association with radio. As many as you might know, the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 will result in the untimely demise of the 100 W bulb in 2012, with all incandescents completely eliminated by 2014. Can't you hear poor Thomas just rolling over in his grave? Better start hoarding the next big collectable - radio pilot lights!



President Richard Lee fills in with an impromptu auction at the November meeting.

The November swapmeet may not have been an overwhelming financial success but we still managed to stay in the black. More importantly, everyone seemed to have a good time. I came home with a set of RCA annual reports starting at 1921, an early 1-tube home-



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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THE PLEASURE OF SHORTWAVE LISTENING

You may not be interested in its collecting or restoration aspects, or obtaining a ham license, but it might be worth considering just the "listening" pleasures of shortwave radio. For starters, here's a re-work of a Robert McMillan article that was released through Reuters in January, 2009 titled "Shortwave Radio Still Packs an Audible Thrill"...ED

Somewhere on a lonely mountaintop on a starry night, or maybe in an apartment on a bustling city block, someone is channeling the whole world onto a mobile device. It's not a phone; it's a shortwave radio. A staple form of broadcasting in many parts of the world since the 1920s and 1930s, shortwave in North America has been mostly a hobby for decades. Now that the Internet is a fixture in many homes in the United States and Canada, there are few practical reasons to buy a shortwave radio. Thousands of stations that once were available only on the shortwave band are online.

Shortwave also is distinctly old fashioned; the action these days revolves around digital audio devices. The contrast is stark: iPods and satellite radios are slim and pocket-sized, while shortwaves are throwbacks, typically as square as a textbook and just as serious looking. So why bother with shortwave?

It's easy and cheap - and fun. You can hear and learn things that you would never find even if you work your search engine like a mule. From Swaziland to Paris to Havana, shortwave broadcasters can surprise an adventurous listener more than any MP3 playlist. You tune carefully, twist the radio from side to side, and there's still a bit of a "Hey, I made this happen!" sort of thing.

It's also magic. Shortwave radio enthusiasts acknowledge the thrill - the romance, in a way - of going out at night and snaring news, music, odd bleeps,

religious zealots and other broadcasts from the wild sea of frequencies in the sky.

In aural terms, the Internet wins. Shortwave by nature sounds dirty: Its signals whoosh from clouds of static and are subject to the whims of sunspots and atmospheric disturbances. But when you hear voices over the noise and squeal, and realize you are hearing Mongolia, live, there is a warmth and a human connection that are hard to find on the Web.

Shortwave also can deliver news faster than you might find it online, and in places where your other devices don't work. It's more portable than a computer, especially if you don't have a laptop and you don't happen to have a hot spot on your favorite beach. Batteries also keep them going a long time when the power goes out.

On a serious note, shortwave stations often resist many government attempts to jam them. Shortwave is unfettered by intermediaries so it's pretty much always there.

You can find shortwave radios at a variety of Web retail and auction shops like Amazon, Universal Radio, The Shortwave Store, Grove Enterprises or even National Public Radio. (They also show up, of course, at NJARC swapmeets.) You could drop thousands of dollars on a radio, but units such as the Eton E100 generally range from \$50 to \$250. A perfectly serviceable radio sells for as little as \$30, but more expensive models are better at pulling in fainter signals.

Handy beginner's guides are available at numerous Internet sites dedicated to the shortwave listening hobby. Listening is best an hour before and after sunrise and sunset - and away from urban areas - because of atmospheric conditions and because many broadcasters in distant lands are gearing up their broadcasts. Try searching for distant shortwave signals, identify the station, write to them and get a "QSL Card," the broadcaster's acknowledgment that you made contact.

For die hards, listening to shortwave can make hours go by in a dream. For others, it's an acquired taste. One listener said his wife is "partially tolerant. I've had radio equipment in my car in the past, and I have learned not to turn it all on when we were going on a date somewhere." (Who would ever think of doing such a thing?)



The 2010 NJARC BCB DX Contest - January 15-24

In the 1920's and 1930's, some radio listeners would compete with each other for the reception of the most distant stations using the same receivers that that we now restore and cherish. We can recapture some of the excitement that the early DX'ers experienced in our own contest.

Official Contest Rules

THE OBJECT: To use vintage radios receivers to receive broadcast-band signals from the greatest possible distance. Performance will be judged by the total mileage for your ten best loggings during a 24-hour session. You will be competing against competitors using similar receivers.

ELIGIBILITY: The contest is open only to members in good standing of the New Jersey Antique Radio Club.

CONTEST PERIOD: The contest period will be from 12:00 Noon, local time at receiving location, Friday, January 15, 2010 through 12:00 Noon, Sunday, January 24, 2010.

SESSIONS: Contestants may submit logs for any two 24-consecutive-hour sessions (noon to noon) during the contest period. You may use only one receiver during a session. That means you may not "bird dog" the simple radio with a more complex radio. You may submit logs for two different receivers. They need not be in the same category.

FREQUENCIES: The Broadcast Band, as defined for the contest, will be from 530 to 1600 kilocycles. No stations on the new extended band, 1610 to 1710 kilocycles, will be counted since many early radios did not cover those frequencies.

RECEIVER CATEGORIES:

- A - Crystal radios
- B - Primitive tube receivers (homebrew also) -1 to 2 tubes plus power supply
- C - 1920's Battery sets (homebrew also) -batteries or modern power supply is OK
- D - Other tube radios sold for home entertainment.
- E - Amateur, commercial, and military tube-type communications receivers.
- F - Transistor radios introduced before 1970.
- G - "Light-Weight" (any radio weighing less than one pound (454 grams)).

SPECIAL AWARDS: Special awards will be given for the best performances by first-time contestants.

ANTENNAS: Anything you like.

LOGS: Submit a log for each of your contest sessions (maximum of two). Each log header should include contestant's name, address, phone number, category, and description of receiver and antenna. Please include you listening address if it is different from you mailing address.

Make a log entry for each station you claim to have heard. Stations must be positively identified. (This is being done on the honor system, and is a somewhat variable concept. If you hear Boston weather on what you know is 1030KC, then go ahead and log WBZ. However, just because you heard a signal on 1160KHz doesn't mean you heard KSL in Salt Lake City.) The contest committee reserves the right to disallow what it feels are outrageous claims. Each entry should include time, frequency, call letters, location, and optional comments. Although we're only judging your ten most distant loggings, submit as complete a log as possible. The committee may make special awards for most stations, most interesting log, etc. as it sees fit.

- A log sheet has been provided for convenience. You may reproduce it or generate a similar one of your own.
- Logs must be postmarked not later than midnight February 2, 2009.
- Logs may be submitted as e-mail attachments.

SCORING: Distances to stations will be calculated by the committee and will be based on great circle distances from Freehold, New Jersey for listening posts within a 100-mile radius of Freehold. We will calculate mileage for other entries based on actual listening location. In all cases, please indicate your ten best loggings to make our job easier.

Special Rule #1: A contestant may claim only one of the Cuban time stations, Radio Reloj, regardless of how many are actually heard. All will be scored as 1279 miles (Havana).

Submit logs to: Tom Provost, 19 Ivanhoe Dr., Robbinsville, NJ 08691, tprovost@pppl.gov
Questions? Al Klase - 908-892-5465 al@ar88.net, Tom Provost - 609-243-2508

HOLIDAY PARTY "MYSTERY" GRAB BAG

One of the traditions at our annual holiday party is the "mystery" grab bag. Each year, we usually like to publish the rules to familiarize new members (and remind long-time members) of this fun tradition.

You are not required (but encouraged) to participate. It starts with a radio-related gift (old or new) for about \$20. Wrap it any way you want...holiday theme, newspaper, old Radio News magazine covers, etc. - deception is the key word. Then the fun begins...

1. Two or more gifts (depending on participation) are chosen at random and marked "DO NOT OPEN."
2. Each participant's name is placed in a hat.
3. The first person whose name is drawn may select either a "DO NOT OPEN" gift (which will not be unwrapped until the end of the game) or any other unopened gift. This gift is unwrapped and shown to all players.
4. A second person's name is then drawn and a gift is selected but NOT immediately unwrapped. This person has a choice to either "swap" the gift (unseen) with the first player's unwrapped gift or keep it. (If a "DO NOT OPEN" gift was selected, it remains wrapped under all circumstances.)
5. If a "DO NOT OPEN" gift was not selected and the second player did not swap his gift with the first player's gift, the selected gift is unwrapped and shown to all players.
6. If a swap was made with the first player, the first player unwraps the swapped gift and shows it to all players. (Only one swap is allowed per each round.)
7. Play progresses with each new player having the opportunity to "steal" any unwrapped gift already selected in exchange for a wrapped gift that was chosen.
8. To add a little spice to the game, the two or more gifts marked "DO NOT OPEN" may be chosen or swapped at any time during the game, but not unwrapped until the end of the game (i.e., all names have been selected).

A few simple rules:

1. **Please be courteous and consider those members who spent some effort in deciding on an appropriate \$20 gift.** A \$1 leftover from a swapmeet's "walk-around auction" is not what we have in mind. This needs to be emphasized; we've had quite a few complaints in this area. If it will be difficult to participate (and this is understood in today's economic times), it would be better if you just sit back and enjoy the antics rather than creating hard feelings.
2. People left with "DO NOT OPEN" gifts at the end of the game are stuck with what they are left with...no exchanges allowed.
3. You need to keep your unwrapped gift in view at all times...it can't be hidden behind your back, in your pocket, under your skirt or under a table (as if anyone would deliberately do this).
3. "Abandon good nature all ye who enter here." Spite, malice, ill will, malignity, retaliation, revenge, reprisal and most of all good fun are all encouraged.

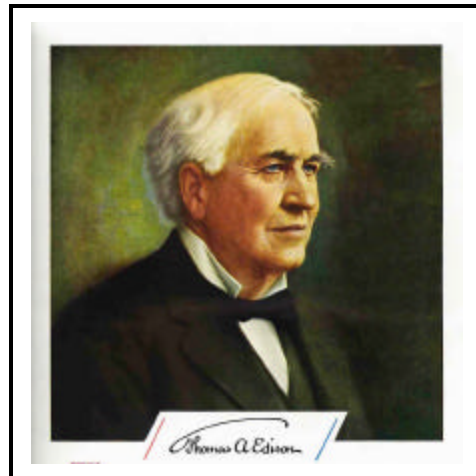
If the rules are still a little confusing, don't worry. Most people catch on once the grab bag begins.

EDISON AND THE RADIO

I recently completed Randall Stross's 2007 eye-opening book "The Wizard of Menlo Park - How Thomas Alva Edison Invented the Modern World." As one reviewer candidly remarked: "Although Edison blazed in the public imagination as a virtual demigod, Thomas Edison's greatest invention may have been his own celebrity. Edison was certainly a technical genius, but Stross excavates the man from layers of myth-making, and separates his true achievements from his almost equally colossal failures."

One of these "failures" involved the Edison Company's attempt at radio manufacturing. Although Edison's sons were the major players in trying to turn around a dying company, the attempt

was complicated by their father's stubbornness to accept ideas that he was not personally responsible for or otherwise conflicted with Edison's unsubstantiated prejudices. The following is an attempt to summarize Stross's research.



In the 1920s, faced by the challenge of the advent of commercial radio stations and the wide availability of free music broadcasts and other entertainment, the Edison phonograph business faced a stiff decline. By the end of 1921, an estimated 1 million listeners had access to radios. A contemporary newspaper account explained to readers that those who owned radio sets could enjoy entertainment that was "literally as free as the air." In desperation, the famed Edison name was supported only by the phonograph, records and small kitchen appliances like electric coffeemakers, waffle irons and toasters included in the "Edicraft" line.

Edison's sons, who by this time had been reluctantly granted limited control of parts of the company's operations, felt that the phonograph end of the business could offer a combination phonograph-radio that would permit its product line to evolve with this new line of consumer technology. Charles and Theodore felt that their father wouldn't feel slighted since the vacuum tube was a modern descendant of Edison's experimental work on the incandescent bulb.

However, Edison did feel slighted. According to Thomas Cowan, a former Edison employee who had several conversations about radio with a hard of hearing Edison, Edison was appalled at the poor quality of the sound from radio. He also said that Edison appeared resentful that he had not personally developed the vacuum tube. Edison did not quash this impres-

sion; he hung a sign on his door that finalized the subject: "I will not talk radio to anyone."

Theodore Edison held a different explanation with regard to his father's refusal to enter the radio business. His father's hearing had deteriorated further. The only way he could hear music that was reproduced electrically was by wearing headphones with the volume set extremely high, producing extreme distortion. It also produced sparks that darted out from the earphones, making the staff very uneasy. That experience convinced his father that radio could not reproduce music without distortion.

Without Edison's personal approval, the radio business was put on hold. Edison's experience with radio on submarines during his WW I research had shown him that the "mutilation of sounds" was a problem that could never be solved. As was typical with Edison, once his opinion was set, the matter was never re-opened. In 1924, he reiterated, "We would not for a moment think of combining a phonograph with a radio." In 1925, when batteries began being replaced by AC voltage and Edison's sons continued to press him, the reply was that the "radio fad" would soon pass.

With \$500,000 backing from Ford and Firestone, Edison elected to start an entirely new career in industrial botany with a mission to discover a source of rubber that could be cultivated in the United States. Official history provided a sanitized version that he "discovered" that goldenrod would serve as an alternate source rather than the failure his research actually was. An employee claimed that the goldenrod mixture, which Edison showed Ford to be able to demonstrate success, had been enriched with real rubber from condoms purchased in bulk for this purpose.

With Edison absorbed in his rubber project, Charles and Theodore set up a research group in Orange to make a phonograph with an electric pickup and moved ahead on plans to introduce a radio. However, they were initially dogged by problems obtaining a necessary license from General Electric.

On January 14, 1929, the Edison Company purchased the Splitdorf Radio Company of Newark, New Jersey and Charles was elected president of the Edison-Splitdorf Corporation (the Radio Division of Thomas A. Edison, Inc.). According to

NJARC member Ben Tongue: "This was a way to get a leg up on the design of their first radio line and secure RCA and Hazeltine patent licenses. The patents were needed in order to legally manufacture and sell competitive radios at that time."

In addition, along with many other manufacturers in the 1920s, Splitdorf had been caught producing too many radios for a contracting market at the beginning of the depression. As a result, Splitdorf was near-bankrupt when it was taken over.

With prototypes ready, Charles and Theodore succeeded in getting their father's grudging assent (who predicted financial failure). Although Edison's fears were ultimately realized, it had been his own intransigence that put the company at such a great disadvantage as a late entrant.

Charles and Theodore were also faced with problems in setting up an expensive production facility and selecting a design that would be suitable to consumers. On October 9, 1929 Charles prepared a report for his father that showed a loss of \$1.3 million due to start-up costs for the radio. Although Charles still remained hopeful, he could not know that two weeks later the stock sell-off would begin with Black Thursday on October 24th followed by Black Monday and Black Tuesday.

A few days later, Thomas A. Edison, Inc. announced that it would cease producing records and refit the factory for the production of radios. These radios were sold not as tabletop sets but as beautiful pieces of furniture designed for the high-end market. Each model was encased in a wide console standing about four feet high, finished in walnut and hidden behind sliding doors. This was not the best position to be in during depression conditions. For example, the top-of-the-line Model C-1 radio-phonograph boasted a single play phonograph that would play both lateral cut 78's and vertical cut "Edison Diamond" discs using a special electric pickup. It also included a sensitive regenerative TRF radio, dual 10" Peerless dynamic speakers and a power amplifier using two parallel connected type 250 output tubes. The cabinet was stated to be an exact reproduction of an Italian credenza done in shaded walnut with polychrome highlights on the doors and around the top. All this could

be had for a mere \$1,100 (about \$11,500 in today's dollars) - less tubes of course. (It is doubtful that many of these were produced or sold, perhaps less than 200. So far, only five are accounted for in radio collections.)



The Edison Model C-1

The sales literature seemed to be addressed less to the general public than to Edison himself. It boasted of the "engineering refinement" that provided volume levels ranging "from a whisper to a mighty crescendo and both without distortion!"

It was only a year later that Charles and Theodore informed their father that there was no point in continuing a hopeless endeavor; radio production was shut down immediately. Charles wrote his father about the end of the experiment: "Radio is the last of our products to carry the name Edison in the home. Although we have lost a pile of money, there is at least the solace of knowing that it was a good product worthy of the name, and that we have nothing to be ashamed of in the way it was sold."

Thomas Alva Edison died at the age of 84 at home with his family at his bedside. For more than fifty years, as you will learn if you read Stross's book, Edison had promoted his own image and the notion that it was his hands alone that had performed miracles. This preparatory work made the eulogies he received upon his death easy to write. In many, Edison now received even credit for helping "to perfect" the radio.

Edison, continued...

For more extensive information on Edison radios, go to www.bentongue.com. Here you will find many documents that were copied directly from originals in the Edison National Historic Site. These include minutes of internal meetings related to radio design and manufacturing, user and service data for Edison radios, copies of advertisements, and Annual Reports of the Radio Division...Ed

(The following ad is courtesy of www.bentongue.com)

EDISON

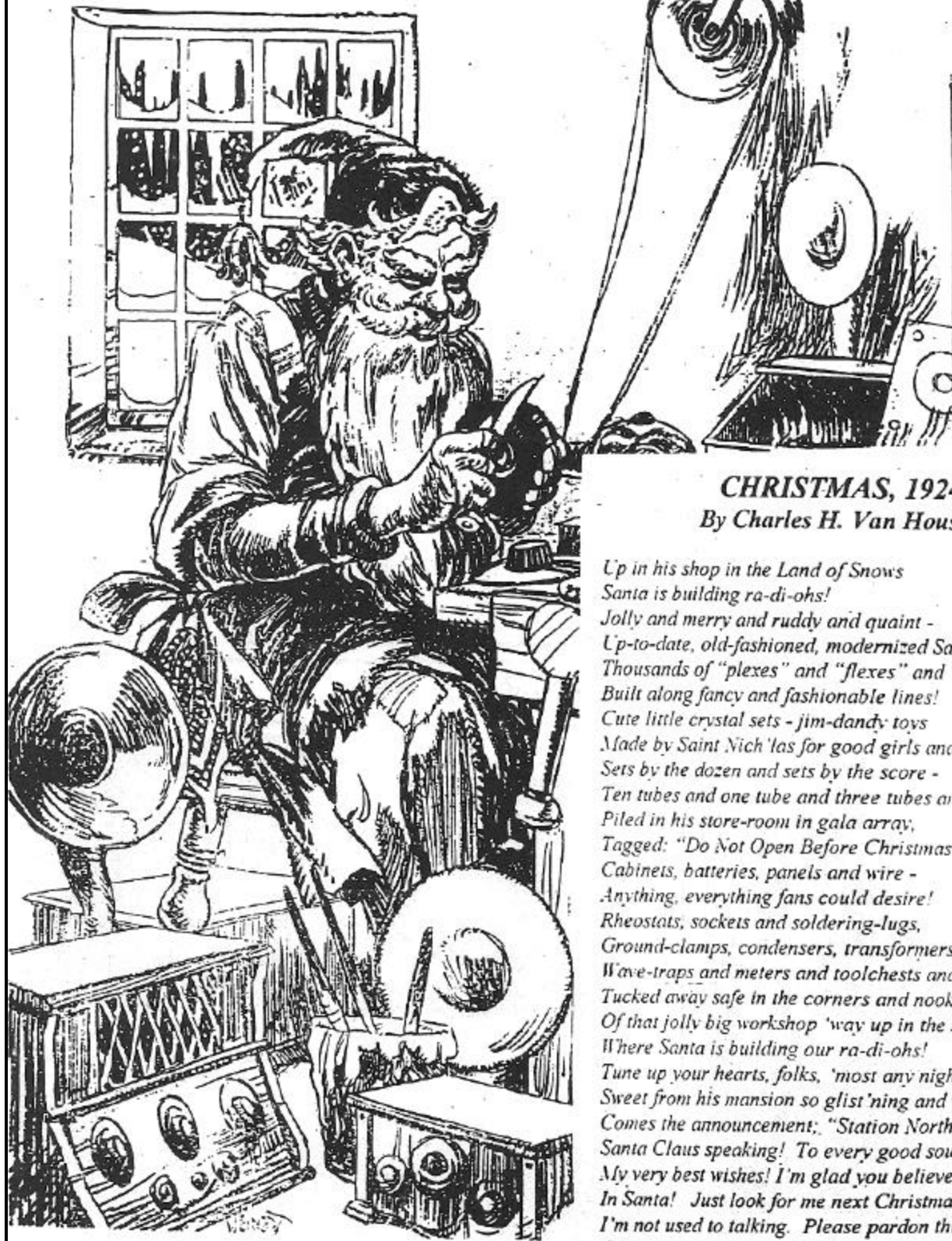


Model R-6. Here is the Edison triple screen-grid set, super-selective, yet super-sensitive. It employs nine tubes — three '24's, three '27's, two '45's in balanced push-pull arrangement, and one '80 rectifying tube. Automatic volume control, without sacrifice of sensitivity. Adjustment provided for acoustic requirements of individual installations. Its cabinet is a noteworthy example of superb design and craftsmanship. Beautifully finished in walnut, with panels and doors carved after a fine old linen-fold design. \$297 (less tubes). Prices slightly higher in the far West.

ADVANCED RADIO! Radio replete with the most modern developments — yet fully perfected with characteristic Edison thoroughness ● ● ● Two years ago the advent of the Edison Radio proved the high expectations of the trade and the public to be more than justified. And now, two years of success founded on sound policies and fair dealing have doubly confirmed Edison's right to leadership ● ● ● Again this year Edison leads with *truly* advanced radio. Two powerful circuits are presented in five cabinet designs — radios that in actual performance produce the results rightly expected of Edison. Both circuits, Edison-screen-grid and Edison-neutrodyne, are ready for home enjoyment — not home experiment. The Edison is the dependable modern radio that dealers everywhere are finding it profitable to sell.



All Edison models — and only Edison — possess Light-O-Matic Tuning, which instantly, easily and accurately brings in the listener's favorite stations, announcing each arrival with a flash of light.



CHRISTMAS, 1924
By Charles H. Van Housen

Up in his shop in the Land of Snows
 Santa is building ra-di-ohs!
 Jolly and merry and ruddy and quaint -
 Up-to-date, old-fashioned, modernized Saint!
 Thousands of "plexes" and "flexes" and "dynes"
 Built along fancy and fashionable lines!
 Cute little crystal sets - jim-dandy toys
 Made by Saint Nich 'las for good girls and boys!
 Sets by the dozen and sets by the score -
 Ten tubes and one tube and three tubes and four!
 Piled in his store-room in gala array,
 Tagged: "Do Not Open Before Christmas Day!"
 Cabinets, batteries, panels and wire -
 Anything, everything fans could desire!
 Rheostats, sockets and soldering-lugs,
 Ground-clamps, condensers, transformers and plugs!
 Wave-traps and meters and toolchests and books
 Tucked away safe in the corners and nooks
 Of that jolly big workshop 'way up in the snows
 Where Santa is building our ra-di-ohs!
 Tune up your hearts, folks, 'most any night -
 Sweet from his mansion so glist'ning and white
 Comes the announcement: "Station North Pole!
 Santa Claus speaking! To every good soul
 My very best wishes! I'm glad you believe
 In Santa! Just look for me next Christmas Eve!
 I'm not used to talking. Please pardon this cough!
 God bless all the kiddies! S.C. 'signing off!"

The above poem and illustration is courtesy of "The Radio" section Philadelphia's *Evening Public Ledger* for Saturday, November 29, 1924...Ed.