



IARCHS NEWS

Colin Kennedy 525

Iowa Antique Radio Club & Historical Society

Winter '03 – '04

Sometimes in the course of one of those “one thing leads to another” situations, things just keep getting better as you go along. The lead article in this issue is a result of one of those times; let me explain. Back in early December a bunch of us gathered at Jack Sweeny’s place (as reported elsewhere in this issue). During the conversations that night, Jack said he’d found a good, comparatively inexpensive source for the rubber edging that goes around the dial glass in many old sets. Since I was in need of some, I made it a point to get the name and phone number of his contact. That’s how I came to visit with Curt Lutz who is a member of OKVRC, the *Oklahoma Vintage Radio Collectors*. When I called Curt I found that he was indeed, as Jack had reported, a really nice guy who was very enthused to talk to a fellow collector. I ordered a supply of dial glass rubber from him and in the package he threw in a copy of the OKVRC Broadcast News, their club newsletter. And that’s how I came to read a really well written piece on vintage radio programming written by Sherry Cowden, a contributing editor (“contributing editor” has a nice ring to it, don’t ya think? – any volunteers out there?). So I dropped an email to Sherry and in a few days got a really nice reply from her and her husband after they’d cruised around my web site a bit. We exchanged comments on a number of things of mutual interest and she graciously agreed to allow me to use her material in IARCHS NEWS.....and...

that’s how we’ve come to have a guest contributor to lead off this issue.

Dave Perkins

Remembering Broadcast

By Sherry Cowden of OKVRC

I think my selection of topics this month came about as the result of watching the video of “Finding Nemo” at least a dozen times with my 3-year-old granddaughter. Fortunately this movie is so delightful that it is not a hardship to watch it over and over. It is bound to become a classic. Anyway, there is a funny scene in the movie when a flock of seagulls are vying for a meal of fish. They repeatedly squawk “Mine! Mine! Mine!” As I was thumbing through my resource materials, I kept going back to three programs that are often lumped together. This juxtaposition occurs because of both the similarity of their titles and the content of the programs. The first program was the precursor to possibly the most successful situation comedy in television history. The second spawned a movie version that is most memorable for launching the comedy team of Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis. And even though the third offering ran on CBS radio for three years, most people remember it as a television show. The three programs are *My! My!*

My!...My Favorite Husband, My Friend Irma, and My Little Margie.

On television today, we see women portrayed as judges, doctors, attorneys, and other professionals. In radio's heyday, women were much more stereotypical. In "Raised on Radio," Gerald Nachman notes: "There was almost a formula, a sort of First Law of Sitcoms, that if a comedy involved only a couple, almost invariably the woman was a dodo. If, however, there were children, then the woman was suddenly imbued with brains and wisdom and the man became the dummy." There were sometimes wise older women in soap operas, and several battle-axes (such as Amos 'n' Andy's Sapphire), but the three female leads in the "My's" all fall into the category of ditzy broad.

My Favorite Husband was first seen on CBS, July 5, 1948. It starred Lucille Ball, a red-headed actress who had appeared in movies, mostly in comedic roles, since the early 1930's. The premiere of *Husband* co-starred Lee Bowman, with Richard Denning replacing him for the remainder of the program's three-and-a-half year run. Ball played housewife Liz Cooper, married to banker George Cooper. They were a not-quite typical couple living in "a little white two-story house" in the suburbs (but with a maid, Katie, played by Ruth Perrott). Contributing to the comedic dilemmas that zany Liz cooked up for her lovable husband were his short-tempered boss Rudolph Atterbury (played by Gale Gordon, later to play a similar part on Lucille Ball's post-Desi TV series) and his wife (played by Bea Benaderet). Jess Oppenheimer, Madelyn Pugh, and Bob Carroll wrote the show and Oppenheimer directed. Wilber Hatch conducted the orchestra. The show was initially based on a novel, "Mr. and Mrs. Cugat," a fictional version of the lives of bandleader Xavier Cugat and his wife, songstress Abbe Lane. When the Latin

bandleader sued the show, the characters became the Coopers.

Lucille Ball was not used to acting in front of a radio studio audience and initially was somewhat constrained. Director Jess Oppenheimer wanted her to try for a "wildly antic quality." A passage from Oppenheimer's memoirs is quoted in "Raised on Radio:" "I had been trying for weeks to get her and Dick Demming to loosen up and act out the jokes and reactions . . . instead of just standing there waiting to read the next line when the laugh subsided. I knew how this could be from watching Jack Benny do his radio program." He got her in to see the Benny show and "instantly she got the idea, starting to ham it up behind the mike much more broadly than before. There were times I thought we'd have to catch her with a butterfly net to get her back to the microphone. The audience roared their approval and Lucy loved it." This was the creation of the character that America came to know and love so well as Lucy of television's *I Love Lucy* show.

When *My Favorite Husband* made the transition to television, it was without Lucille Ball (Joan Caulfield and Barry Nelson played the Coopers on TV). By that time, Miss Ball was involved in a much more spectacular enterprise. When she was asked to move the radio program to television, she told the network that she would only do it if her real-life husband, Desi Arnaz, portrayed her TV husband. Making him a Cuban bandleader (which Arnaz was in real life) revisited the initial premise of the Cugat novel. In the TV show, bandleader Ricky Ricardo's zany wife Lucy is enamored of celebrity and convinced that she could be a star if only her husband would cooperate. The Atterburys became the Mertzes (played by Vivian Vance and William Frawley). The entire creative team of writer/director Oppenheimer and writers Pugh and Carroll, along with orchestra leader Hatch, made the transition to the

television series. The pilot for “I Love Lucy” was made during Lucille Ball’s last year on radio’s *My Favorite Husband*. Six *Husband* scripts were reworked for the Lucy show. Most folks don’t know that I Love Lucy also ran as a radio program, with the same cast, overlapping the television show’s 1952 season. The 50-year-old television series still runs, worldwide, today. It was arguably the most successful TV situation comedy ever.

Frankly, I don’t remember *My Favorite Husband*. I do remember our second “ditzy broad” (a blonde one at that). *My Friend Irma*, created by Cy Howard, celebrated lead character Irma Peterson’s naïve and lovable nuttiness. The beautiful (and actually quite intelligent) actress Marie Wilson played Irma. Irma worked as a law firm stenographer in New York. Her roommate and the show’s narrator, logical Jane Stacy, feels both affection and exasperation toward her scatter-brained friend. In one episode Jane confides her infatuation for her millionaire boss – “Wouldn’t it be great if I would end up being Mrs. Richard Rhinelander the Third?” she says to Irma, who replies, “what good will that do if he’s got two other wives.” Other characters in the show were the girls’ landlady Mrs. O’Reilly, fellow tenant Professor Kropotkin (played by the versatile actor Hans Conreid), and Irma’s streetwise boyfriend Al (“Hi-ya, chicken!”). Jane says of Al, “he has no money, no car . . . no prospects and no future.” Irma’s reply: “I know, but I have to stick with him in case things get tough.” The show was broadcast from 1947 to 1954. The theme song was “Friendship, Friendship, just a perfect Friendship.” *My Friend Irma* also made the transition to television. And, several motion pictures featuring Marie Wilson as Irma were filmed. The first was 1949’s “My Friend Irma,” produced by Hal Wallis. That film is mostly remembered for launching the movie careers of the

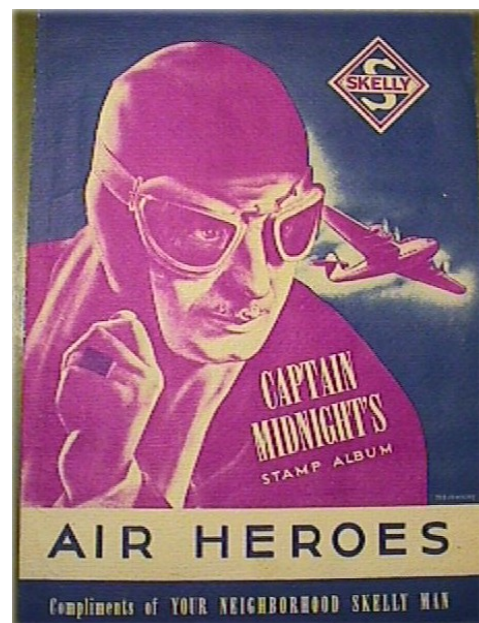
comedy team of Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis.

Finally, the last “My” -- *My Little Margie*. Like most people, I only remember this series from television. But a radio version ran on CBS from December 1952 through 1955. Margie Albright lived with her widowed father, Verne, a business executive who was often befuddled by his screwy and scheming daughter. Father and daughter (played by Gale Storm and Charles Farrell) lived in a New York City Fifth Avenue apartment, and their comic adventures included their elderly neighbor Mrs. Odetts (Verna Felton) and Margie’s bumbling boy friend Freddie (Gil Stratton, Jr.). Like *Husband* and *Irma*, *Margie* also made the journey to TV-land.

I must say, “My! My! My! . . . I miss them all.”

Resources:

Tune In Yesterday, J. Dunning, 1976;
Raised on Radio, G. Nachman, 1998;
Radio’s Golden Years; V. Terrace, 1981;
The Big Broadcast, F. Buxton &
B. Owen, 1972.



Eastern Iowa Meeting Report, December 5th, 2003 Meeting held at Jack Sweeney's home in Dubuque at 7PM

Attending were: Jack Sweeney, Tom Zenisek, Doug Spyrison, Dave and Willi Perkins, Jerry and Donna Lange, Fred Sear, Anton Vanicek, Robert Seeber, Jim Coohy, Jim Moran

Upcoming Events: Power Show with radio Display and flea market July 16-18, a Radio Display at the State Fair is a possibility again, Linn County Historical Society early 2004, see Dave Perkins announcement in this issue.

Show and Tell Fred Sear brought his now restored Zenith 835 tombstone which we had seen mid restoration at the last meeting and really shows well now. Tom Zenisek brought a Zenith shutter dial (only the metal dial) he had refinished. Tom had worked with Rock Sea Enterprises in developing a decal to replicate the original dial scale. The results are excellent and others may now benefit as the decal should now be available for others to use in their restoration project. Jack Sweeney had an original radio transcription record used to make a sound recording of radio broadcasts in the early days before tape recording. He also offered a resource for the rubber gasket used in Zenith Shutter dial radios for the dial glass. Additionally he had a conundrum radio, a unique deco looking painted wood radio with a Crosley chassis and the German Reich emblem affixed. Jerry Lange had an old Dubuque 1940's era electronics component manufacturer's brochure, Lamilek Corporation. Dave Perkins brought his homebrew FM "crystal" set which looks a lot like a copper mortar. We ventured out in to the cold night air for a demonstration which uses a directional antenna. Dave tuned in a local FM station which played out of what looked mysteriously like a transistor radio but Dave insisted was just a battery operated amplifier and speaker.

After fiddling with the tuning a bit, it came in clearly. *(It really WAS just an amp..HONEST see my column Dave ;^)*

Next Meeting: Jerry Lange's home, Feb 20th

Submitted by Doug Spyrison

And here is a follow up on one of the mystery radios mentioned in the preceding regional meeting report: Jack Sweeney has subsequently found out that, that swastika bearing Crosley was likely produced as a fund raiser for the 1936 Berlin Olympics. It seems they were offered for sale to those in the U.S. of German heritage who wanted to contribute to the '36 homeland team. He's since seen, or at least heard of, a similarly manufactured example made by American Bosch.

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**VERY IMPORTANT
CLUB MEETING NOTICE**

On the evening of Friday April 2 (the evening before the Harris auction) we will be having a club board meeting at the home of Dave Perkins. Any and all club members are invited and encouraged to attend as we review the club's financial report and go over activities planned for next Spring and Summer. Gathering for socializing, show and tell etc. will begin around 6 PM (earlier if you're already in the area) with the meeting to start around 7 or 7:30. Dave's home is located back off of highway 14 just over two miles south of Marshalltown. Shortly after cresting the first hill south of town there is a "no passing" zone, the next left (on the East side of the highway) is our private lane with a cluster of mail boxes just off the road. Our rural address number is **2608**; we are in the last house on that lane (it is not visible from the highway). You can also call 641-752-3417 for directions. Snacks and beverages will be provided.

Dave Perkins

Dues Notice

As published in the minutes of the 4/4/03 IARCHS meeting, \$10 yearly dues have been reinstated beginning with the 2004 calendar year. Your dues status is noted on the mailing label of each newsletter, the date indicates which year your dues are paid up through. Most of us have 12/2003 noted on this newsletter.

Mail your \$10 dues check, made out to "IARCHS", to the treasurer:

Doug Spyrison
1295 Grove Terrace
Dubuque, IA 52001

To accommodate the usual Marshalltown auction goes, **the final Dues due date is April 3, 2004.**

I don't want to lose a single member. However, as a practical necessity, I will ask the members present at the anticipated 4/2004 IARCHS meeting to act on whether non paying members should continue to receive newsletters. This is necessary to reduce the newsletter cost of persons no longer interested in the club.

I sincerely hope everyone will choose to remain in the club and mail in their dues. **ALSO PLEASE SEND ME YOUR CURRENT PHONE NUMBER AND EMAIL ADDRESS TO UPDATE THE CONTACT LIST.**

Doug Spyrison, IARCHS Treasurer



IARCHS Contacts & Commitment

President	Jerry Lange, 790 Kane St. Dubuque, Ia 52001 Crimclov@mwci.net 563-556-3050
Treasurer	Doug Spyrison, 1295 Grove Terrace Dubuque, Ia 52001 Dougs Spyrison@mchsi.com 563-588-2713
Secretary	Dwight Baker 2626 NW 17 th st. Ankeny, Ia 50021 Vtaudio@hotmail.com 515-965-0999
Newsletter	Dave Perkins, 2608 C Reed Ave Marshalltown, Ia 50158 Spam_Whole@Yahoo.com 641-752-3417

IARCHS is a not for profit club whose purpose statement (as given in the club by-laws) is:

- 1) To provide an organization for collectors and historians of wireless, radio, television and other similar items.
- 2) To promote acquisition and preservation of biographical, technical and historical data, through the collecting of radios, stories, photographs, literature and other related items, particularly with respect to the inventors and early radio pioneers of Iowa.
- 3) To educate and enrich the public knowledge about the historical and cultural significance of radio by means of lectures, discussions, publications, workshops, displays and presentations.
- 4) To encourage and assist individuals in their preservation and restoration of radio and television related items to a condition consistent with the original intent of their manufacturer.
- 5) To create and foster an interest in radio history.

The **IARCHS News** newsletter is published and distributed (more or less) quarterly to all members of record and to similar clubs and organizations at their request.



MEET YOUR FELLOW MEMBERS

We could use someone to host a central or western Iowa gathering; how about a spring get together at your place? If **any** member would like to host such a get together, please contact me (Dave Perkins) with the date, time & directions.

Here is the latest set of announced regional meetings they are:

April 21, 2004
Jim Coohy
406 Clarke Drive
Dubuque, Iowa 52001
Phone 563-582-2267

June 11, 2004
Jack Sweeney
321 Olympic Heights Rd.
Dubuque, Iowa 52001
Phone 563-588-1831
email: mrradio3@mchsi.com

August -- 2004 open yet to be decided

October 13, 2004 @7:00 pm
Doug Spyrison
1295 Grove Terrace
Dubuque, Iowa 52001
Phone 563-588-2713
email: dougspyrison@mchsi.com

Items Wanted / For Sale

AVAILABLE FREE OF CHARGE: A PHOTOCOPY OF THE SCHEMATIC DIAGRAMS FOR YOUR ANTIQUE RADIO FROM THE OLD RIDER AND SAMS MANUALS, AVAILABLE TO IARCHS MEMBERS COURTESY OF JACK SWEENEY, 321 OLYMPIC HEIGHTS, DUBUQUE IA 52001 . ENCLOSE MAKE AND MODEL NUMBER AND A 4x10 SELF ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE

LARRY'S RADIO REPAIR: \$20 MINIMUM LABOR, YOU PAY FOR PARTS AND UPS SHIPPING; FAST TURN AROUND. CALL LARRY MOSER 303-742-2165

DIAL GLASS RUBBER: AS MENTIONED IN THE LEADOFF ARTICLE, ANYONE IN NEED OF THE RUBBER EDGING FOR DIAL GLASSES SHOULD CONTACT **CURT LUTZ**. HE CAN BE REACHED AT 918-251-4915 or OldeRadios@cs.com HIS PRICES ARE WELL BELOW ANTIQUE RADIO SUPPLY - Dave

HELP REQUESTED: I RECENTLY ACQUIRED ABOUT 200 WESTERN ELECTRIC TUBES AND NEED SOMEONE TO HELP ME TEST THE ONES MY HICKOCK 537 WON'T. I INTEND TO SELL THEM AND WOULD LIKE TO BE SURE THEY CHECK OUT OK. I AM TOLD A TV7 OR TV 11 WILL TEST THESE. PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOU WILL CHECK THESE FOR ME OR LET ME BORROW OR RENT A TESTER. I CAN EMAIL OR MAIL A LIST OF TUBE TYPES. ANY HELP APPRECIATED. TOM ZENISEK 257 24TH ST. NW, CEDAR RAPIDS, IA 52405 PHONE 319 362 1541 OR EMAIL TOMJONZEE@AOL.COM

I HAVE A COUPLE HUNDRED TUBES, 7 PIN, 9 PIN, OCTAL SOME METAL. SOME NEW, SOME PULLS; BELIEVE THEY ALL WORK. ANY MEMBER NEEDING A TUBE OR TWO, JUST LET ME KNOW. BOB MUHS, 1018 1ST STREET, CAMANCHE, IA 52370 PHONE 563 259 2010 OR EMAIL RMUHS@MCHSI.COM

MARK'S ANTIQUE RADIO REPAIR: RADIOS OF THE 20'S, 30'S & 40'S REPAIRED. 10 YEARS EXPERIENCE. CONTACT MARK MOWERY 802 N. 8TH STREET - APT. 16, CLEAR LAKE, IA 50428 PHONE 641 357 7751

Ad Policy: Ads up to 100 words in length may be submitted by IARCHS Members and are free of charge. You may request your ad run up to 3 issues, if you don't specify it will run one issue, you may resubmit your ad. Submit your ads by mail or e-mail to the editor. Issue Deadlines: March 1, June 1, September 1, and December 1

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Editors' Column: Dave Perkins

Well, February – the longest short month of the year - is about behind us and winter is growing short faster than my project list. I did manage to finish up restoration of a Delco farm radio I'd promised Ed Kamp, and I played a bit more with that cheap AM transmitter design I found a while back (see the wrap up of that in this issue's *Tips and Tricks* section) but I've managed to start and stop a couple times on the Zenith table top I figured to get done by spring; darn home repairs anyway – it's always something broken or leaking it seems. Along the way I've also managed to "meet" (via phone & email) a couple really nice folks in a club I don't recall hearing of before. Not only does Oklahoma have a couple active antique radio groups, they also have a nice web site. Check it out at <http://members.cox.net/okvrc> if you're on line and so inclined.

Next I really must deal with an issue of some (good natured) controversy. Yes I really did demonstrate an FM crystal set at our get together in December. Yes it really IS possible to make an FM slope detector with a couple hunks of copper pipe, a small variable cap and a germanium diode, and YES THAT LITTLE BOX WAS JUST AN AMPLIFIER! I used it because it's too darn hard to pass around a set of headphones....sheesh. Actually, I wish I could claim I came up with that elegant design, but credit for that belongs to a HAM who sent the idea in to QST magazine some years ago. Regrettably, as of this writing, I've lost the note I had pointing to that article (and his name), but I do still have a link to a site that gives you pretty clear construction directions. If you'd like to build one yourself, or you're just curious go to <http://www.vacuumtubesinc.com/info8.html> for a construction diagram. You should know that finding 3" copper pipe can be a bit difficult and it's pricey. Now that I have this version working, I have "round toit" plans to build a version that tunes mechanically with a sliding plug in place of the small variable cap.

After hearing of their financial difficulties at our December get together, I've since found out that they will be open for visitors this Spring and the RadioDaze show opens at the Linn County historical society in Cedar rapids on March 8th; I'll be conducting a parent / child crystal set construction program there on Sunday March 14. The show runs up into June and I encourage you to stop by during its run; judging from what I've seen of the facility and been told of their plans for this exhibit, it'll be fascinating.

On a related note, I have to beg someone's pardon. I was contacted by a member that I'd not met previously who read of my series of crystal set projects in the schools and so on, and they offered some earphones for use in these projects. From the initial discussion it was not clear how well they might work, so he sent me a sample to test. The result was they work just fine. BUT, as was the case with the name of the fellow who devised the FM crystal set, I have to confess that **I lost your name and address** in my "piles of files" system. So, if you're still inclined, please contact me again.

I hope to see many of you at my place for the meeting on April 2.

Dave



Tips and Tricks

In this issue I want to wrap up a discussion I started last time about a really low cost AM transmitter design I saw on the web site www.scitoys.com. In my original trials I found that it worked well except for being under modulated (so you are obliged to crank up the volume on the receiver), I took some time to experiment further over the holiday break. Armed with an assortment of audio range transformers scrounged from the many boxes of "good stuff" I have laying about the shop, I warmed up my old HeathKit scope and set out to see how far I could push the envelope (literally) of this design.

The short summary of what I found is this: not very far. It didn't take too long looking at the modulation envelope generated by this set up to realize that it is limited on the downward swing of the supply (what would be going below zero volts if it could). Below a certain level, somewhere around 2 volts for the particular oscillator I was testing, it just clips and, if you push it, it shuts down until you remove the power. The net effect is that the most you can achieve is something like 80 to 85% modulation (according to my calibrated, but aging

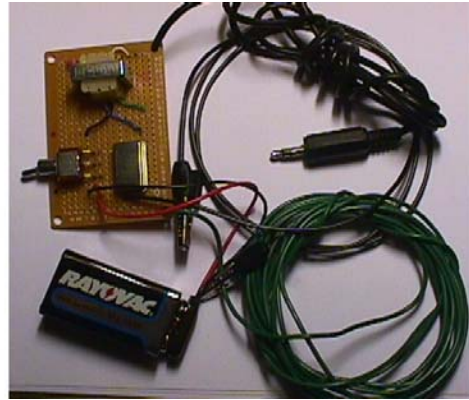
eyeball) and even then it starts to sound a bit mushy.

This is NOT to say that it isn't worthwhile building one of these to demonstrate your old radios with programming from the appropriate era. As I reported in the last issue, if you just turn up to volume on your receiver a bit, you'd be amazed at the clear signal you can send around the room with \$10 worth of common parts.

Here is the best compromise design I found using common parts from Radio Shack and Allied :

- PC boardRS# 276-149
- Audio Transformer.....RS# 273-1380
- CTS MX045 oscillator from Allied, Jameco etc.
- 9 volt battery or equivalent DC supply
- battery clip (if applicable)
- power switch (optional)
- 1/8" phone jack & cord for the input device

Using the headphone jack on a Sony Diskman portable CD player as the source, this configuration worked the best:



The \$10 AM transmitter

