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QST Issue: Sep 2001

Title: Thordarson 1938 100-W Transmitter

Author: John H. Dilks III, K2TQN

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OLD RADIO

Thordarson 1938 100-W Transmitter

Transformer companies made their money by selling transformers. Early on they found that providing schematics of well-designed transmitters using their products increased sales. Thordarson Electric Mfg Co was one of the most successful. Starting in 1934 they provided a giveaway publication called the *Transmitter Guide*. It was loaded with great photos of ham stations and transmitters. It also contained articles, parts lists and schematics of transmitters from 20 W all the way up to 1-kW.

Thordarson's introduction of a "new" 100-W transmitter, "designed specifically for Ham requirements," in the September 1938 issue of *QST* caught everyone's attention. Their two-page ad was followed with 12 additional ads from many of the ham stores. Harvey Radio's ad said in part, "[It] is available in 'Foundation Unit' form with complete instructions for assembly and operation. Chassis, panels and chassis brackets are supplied completely punched for easy assembly.... Approximate price complete including Cabinet, but less Tubes and Crystals is \$139.50."

The RF tube line-up is 6L6, 6L6, to a Taylor TZ-40. The modulator line-up is a 6J7, 6F6, 6F6, driving two 6L6s in push-pull. It was designed as two self-contained units, each with a built-in power supply. The transmitter section could be used alone for CW or as an exciter. The modulator could be added later, saving an initial outlay of cash. The modulator could also be used with other transmitters.

Recently Vance Gildersleeve, K5CF, found a 100-W transmitter in need of a complete restoration. It had belonged to Louie McMurray, WA5MDK of Plainview, Texas and was given by his son to Ed Mickle, KE5OB. Ed passed it on to Vance.

It was really dirty from years of sitting around. Vance cleaned it using Naval Jelly on the rust spots, and with a lot of scrubbing using damp cloths and Q-tips it started looking good again. He spray painted the rust spots and the cabinet, replaced the rusty hardware and installed the missing 300 mA meter in the modulator. Next he went through the components and replaced all the defective ones.

Now operational again, Vance uses it



Thordarson 100-W transmitter as found.



Thordarson 100-W transmitter after restoration.

primarily on CW in the Antique Wireless Association's Old Timer contests. He says it works great with either crystal or VFO control.

For more information on K5CF and this transmitter, including schematics, please visit my Web page at www.eht.com/oldradio/arrrl/index.html.

Collector Profile K5CF Vance Gildersleeve

Vance says, "I first became interested in radio while still in grammar school. I still have the little crystal set that my father bought me. In high school I became a Boy Scout and learned the Morse code. I bought a Gross CW25 kit and put it together. My original receiver was a Hallicrafters Super 7.

"After graduating from high school in May of 1937, I went immediately to Port Arthur College, in Port Arthur, Texas. There I studied radio/electronic theory to obtain a 1st Class Radiotelephone License and a 2nd Class Radiotelegraph License."

He was first licensed as W5GST on October 12, 1937 and has held numerous other calls since then, having moved around the country. In 1940 he worked as a broadcast engineer at KTEM, his first job. This picture was taken there, where he was rooming with a family in Temple, Texas.

Now retired, Vance had an interesting career in radio. From 1941 to 1949 he was a Flight Radio Officer with Pan American World Airways, flying out of Brownsville, Texas, New Orleans, Los Angeles and San Francisco. He was a Broadcast Engineer at KRON-TV, later with Eimac as an Electronic Technician, and retired after 18 years with Ampex Corporation as a Senior Field Service Engineer and Office Manager.



1940 station of W5GST. The 40-20-10 meter RF section at the top of the rack was built around the Gross CW25 chassis. It consisted of a 6V6G triode crystal oscillator, an 807 buffer/doubler and a Taylor T40 final. It ran 100 W on CW and about 75 W on phone. His receiver was a Hallicrafters SX 16.

QST