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OLD RADIO

Emergencies: We've Always Been Ready

This morning as I write this column I am again reminded of the importance of ham radio and our ability to assist authorities by providing communications in time of disaster. Three days have past since Hurricane Katrina wreaked its damage on our Gulf Coast. Reports of ham help are now just starting to be recognized. By the time all of this is over I would expect the stories, if all were told, would completely fill several issues of *QST*.

Hams always helping is not an accident, but is a concerted effort of people with like interests. Early on, "The Old Man," Hiram Percy Maxim, and his friends knew that radio could be an important tool to move information. Hence the name "American Radio Relay League" was adopted. Back then few people had telephones to communicate and telegraph was king of the information industry, providing written messages to individuals, business and governments. Ham radio also had the ability to "relay" information to individuals, and in the time of emergency, to provide vital information to the authorities.

Over the years ARRL championed ham radio's emergency assistance successes by providing reports in *QST*. This encouraged others to think what they might do if something were to happen near them. Field Day was started so that we could practice under emergency conditions, and so we could hone our skills. Over the years *QST* designed and featured many portable and emergency radio sets that could be easily operated on battery or emergency power. They still do to this day.



Looking inside, plenty of room for batteries and accessories.

QST and the ARRL were not alone in this thinking. A good idea catches on. Soon other magazines were featuring "emergency" radios in their pages. Most of these sets were small, containing just a few tubes, and were easy to build. Many were built and a lot of them have survived. Last month I described one.

This month I had another subject planned, but Katrina changed that. I decided this would be a good time to show you a radio pair that was built for these purposes. I had hoped to find the magazine that featured these sets first, but so far I have been unsuccessful.

I think they are built too well to be a singular occurrence; in fact, I think these may have been built for, rather than from, an article in one of the magazines. Perhaps one of you will identify these and let me know? How I found them is an interesting story of a sequence of events that fell together for me.

A Portable Transmitter and Receiver

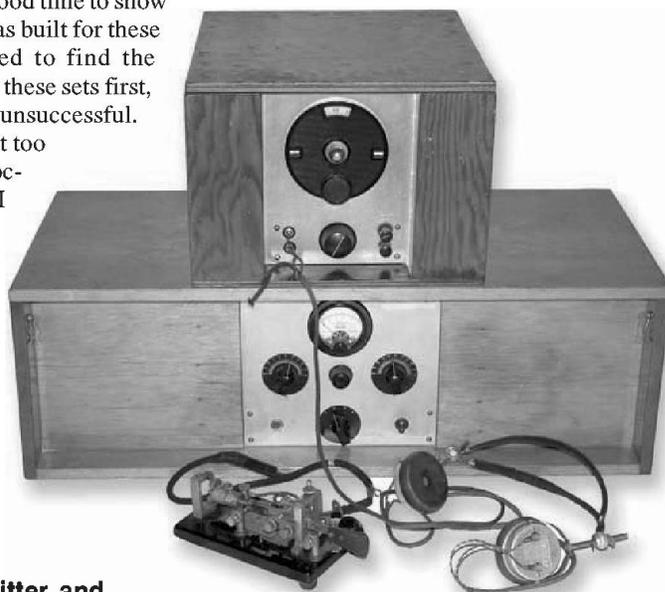
I'm on a few Internet radio groups. One day Tom Norris, NU4G, reported a nice radio he had just bid on with eBay. I went there and looked. It was a great radio, one that would fit into my collection very well. But I resisted bidding on it, because my Internet friend saw it first. (I know it's an auction, and I shouldn't be concerned about bidding, but I didn't bid.) Several of the group commented on the transmitter from time to time, commenting on the vague description placed on it by the seller who was obviously not a "radio" type. It was listed as an "Old Carter Radio Kit in Wooden Cabinet."

I told Tom that a man named Carter wrote for *Radio Craft* magazine and preferred to write about battery sets. So the "Carter" in the listing might be correct. There was a label on the front panel at one time—perhaps this is where

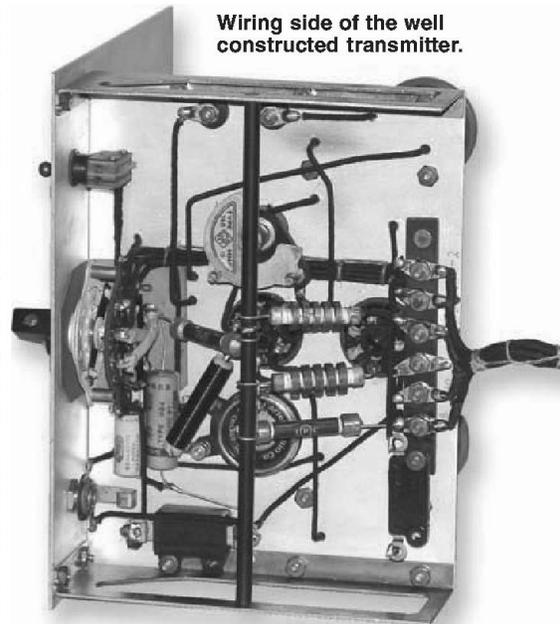
the seller found "Carter." The matching receiver may also be somewhere in one of the magazines. (The label was missing when I received it.)

I e-mailed Tom to tell him there were a couple of coils that I thought went with the transmitter that were listed separately and did not sell. I thought that he should try to get those as well.

Amazingly there were no other bids,

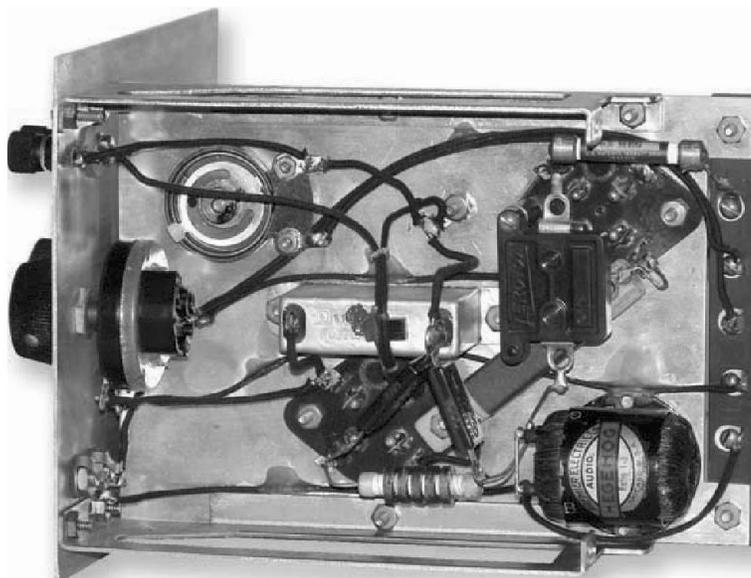


Wiring side of the well constructed transmitter.





Receiver top view showing battery and storage compartments.



Wiring side of the receiver showing good construction techniques.

and my friend got it for the minimum eBay bid, about \$20. I was surprised after he won to see him announce that he didn't really want it, and that he had expected someone else would have bid more. I e-mailed him and told him that it was a really nice radio and worth keeping. Several e-mails later he decided that I should have it and asked the seller to send it directly to me. I happily sent Tom the money he paid.

The day it arrived was exciting. When I opened the package I realized that it was an exceptional piece, well designed and constructed. After studying it for a few minutes, I went on-line with the intention of telling the group just how nice it really was. But for some reason, which I can't explain (it was one of those sixth-sense things) I checked the seller's items on eBay first. There it was, on the seller's list, the matching receiver. It already had around \$50 bid on it, and it was to end soon. How had I missed that earlier? So I entered the bidding and won. The receiver cost me about \$100 with the extra coils thrown in.

It turns out that they are matching units. I first noted that many of the expert construction parts and techniques were the same. And then searching further, I found through the seller that Mike Horvat, W7ASF, had previously owned them. Contacting Mike, he told me that he bought them in 1965 from a lady in Tangent, Oregon, who said her father built them. She did not know when. My guess is they were built in the early 1930s.

Transmitter

The transmitter uses a twin-triode, number 19 tube. This works well on a battery supply of 135 V for the plate and

2 V for filament. You can see separate coils and controls for the oscillator and plate. The large black round crystal in the center, rear, is marked 3958 on a piece of tape. The plug-in coils are marked "Battery Portable 80 Meters." I have an additional set for 40 meters. The wiring under the chassis is extremely well done, a real "picture book" job.

The transmitter cabinet has a large lid and compartments for batteries, key, antenna and other accessories. The lid fastens closed with two small screen door type hooks. The front panel is well thought out and balanced. Two Bakelite thumb-nuts allow connection of the antenna and ground.

Receiver

The receiver uses a single screen-grid number 32 tube for a detector and a triode number 30 tube for audio. This set also works well with a 135 V battery supply for plate and 2 V for the filaments. The wiring is another "picture book" job. The builder used hot wax to hold the wires in place, to keep them from moving around while operating the set.

The receiver cabinet is large enough for two 67 V batteries in the rear. The filament batteries went inside the two square compartments under the black fiber near the front. The battery must have been constructed square to fit in there. They would have been 1 1/8 inches square by 7 inches high. They are wired in parallel, so they would have each been 3 V batteries, utilizing a dropping resistor to the required 2 V. The cabinet also has storage for extra coils and an antenna, ground wire (shown), and a set of earphones.



Receiver top view

He Was Ready for Emergencies

All the builder had to do is put two boxes in his automobile and head out to the emergency (or vacation location) and set up. These sets show wear and tear, so they have been used.

Are You Ready?

Today's transceivers almost all work on 12 V. Think ahead of time about what you need to do, to pack up and head out to an emergency, or (hopefully not) away from an emergency. A good portable antenna, tuner, ropes, extra power cables, earphones, CW key and microphone should be packed in a box, ready to go. Also pack some small tools and a wrench so you can pull auto batteries from other cars if necessary.—K2TQN

QST