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OLD RADIO

Hamfests and Collecting

With the hamfest season starting, you need to do some planning if you want to start a collection. Attention to details will bring success.

Getting Started

I'm often asked, "How do I get started collecting and how much should I pay for something I know nothing about?" The easy answer is to start a collection by buying your first piece without spending too much. A better answer would be to follow this advice:

Plan to spend some time learning about old radios. Read *QST* and other radio classifieds to see the asking prices of equipment. Search the Internet for radio-collecting news groups.

Ask your friends if they know anyone who collects. Then visit someone who has a collection and listen to what they tell you. If asked, your new friend should gladly tell you how he found his first old radio. Maybe he'll tell you about the time when he was in the right place and found a favorite radio. During your visit, when you see something you like, ask what it's worth and where you could find something like it. Ask about other local collectors. I have found collectors to be very friendly. They really enjoy talking about their collections and are anxious to share information.

Find out if there are any clubs nearby for radio collectors. Meet as many collec-

tors as you can by visiting a radio-collecting club. It probably won't be a ham radio club, but you will find hams there. Meeting and getting to know other collectors is very important. It's called networking and you need to do this.

Most collectors will have some radios, or other radio items, they no longer need or want. Collectors usually trade and sell things from time to time, and as time goes by, their interests change and they want to make room. This can be a good opportunity for you. Ask!

Browse through old magazines and books. Just as *QST* today reports on all the new products and modes of operation, the magazines and books from the '20s, '30s, '40s and '50s did the same thing. Reading the "ancient" advertisements and studying the photos can help you recognize good radios and accessories at a glance. This is very important at hamfests, where the collecting competition is sometimes fierce. The first one to pick up the radio often ends up owning it.

How Much Should I Spend?


Accept the fact right now that in the beginning you will probably pay too much from time to time. Everybody does. Even experienced collectors go over the top once in a while! (This may make you feel a little better.) Of course, it's always nice to find

a bargain, but if you see something you really want, and the price is affordable, then buy it and enjoy. In time, your experience will improve your collecting savvy and negotiating. Several genuine bargains later on will make up for those early mistakes.

There is no hard-and-fast list for radio values. There just are too many factors involved, such as appearance, working condition, documentation and historic value (i.e. owned by somebody famous). The values of radios seem to change as often as the wind direction. This is where your experience and research pays off in knowing what to spend.

The value of collectable radios is on the rise. If you buy wisely, you are actually making an investment! The good thing about this kind of investment is that you can enjoy using it while its value appreciates. For additional collecting tips visit my Web page at <http://www.eht.com/oldradio/arrrl/index.html>.

K2TQN's Old Radio Museum Schedule for April 2000.

I'm planning to take my mobile Ham Radio Museum to the Penn-Del Hamfest 2000, host to the ARRL Delaware State Convention on Sunday April 30, 8 AM-1 PM at the Nur Temple in New Castle, Delaware. Look for my call letters on my hat, and say hello.— K2TQN 

Collector Profile

One of the great things about Amateur Radio is its diversity. Another is how patiently it will wait for you while other interests, like jobs and family, occupy your time. When you are ready to return, Amateur Radio gladly accepts you back into the fold.

Stephen Aug, W3DEF, discovered this fact first hand. His ham radio experience started in 1953 as K2EOF. Like many of us, his teen-age years were exciting as he discovered radio. In the first eight to ten years he owned (and still has) a National NC-125 receiver, a Shure 55S and a D-104 microphone and a Bud FCC-90 100-kHz frequency calibrator.

Next came a busy career as a business reporter and editor at the old *Washington Star*. Radio took a back seat as he continued as a business and economics correspondent at ABC News. When the "ABC Early Morning News" started in July 1982, he began his long morning career. For 6 years he also participated on the "Business World" show, anchoring it for its final year and a quarter.

"Since I retired in 1995, I've become a lot more active in ham radio," Steve said. "Most of my time is spent with older rigs." In 1990 he began to collect, starting with a Collins 51J-4 receiver and 312-A-1 speaker. In refurbishing his radios he found that he needed to re-learn what he knew about vacuum tubes. He received much help from his friends, he said.

Since then he has added a B&W 5100-B transmitter with a 51SB-B phasing SSB generator. This along with the 51J-4 is one of his favorite stations, where he enjoys AM as well as vintage SSB operation.

"Changing bands on the B&W takes almost five minutes. There are about 19 dials, knobs and switches that must be manipulated if you're operating sideband," he said. "Phasing out the carrier with those tiny pots can be very challenging, but it's still fun."

