



JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2009

CHRS *Signal*

FOR THE RESTORATION AND PRESERVATION OF EARLY RADIO AND RADIO BROADCASTING

Postcard from the Past

REVEALS PIONEER CATALINA BROADCASTER



Berkeley Radio

NEW INFORMATION FOUND

Plus

Maxwell Library in High Gear

CHRS Headlines

Meet George and Gracie



Postcard from the Past

DETECTIVE WORK SHEDS LIGHT ON
FASCINATING RADIO PIONEER

by Lew Doty



THE SPIRIT OF KFWO

250 WATTS RADIO KFWO 211.1 METERS
WESTERN ELECTRIC EQUIPMENT
AVALON, SANTA CATALINA ISLAND, CALIF.
DAILY 12:30-1:30; 6:30-7:30 P. M.
TUESDAY, FRIDAY, SUNDAY, 5-6 P. M.
SUNDAYS (SPECIAL) 8:15-9:00 P. M.
JESS FRANKLIN'S SPLENDID ST. CATHERINE HOTEL
ORCHESTRA.

"KATALINA FOR WONDERFUL OUTINGS"

A double-exposed image adds to the mystery of this postcard

Recently, my wife Barbara whose family roots goes back to the California Gold Rush, was going through some of her mothers old photos. She found a picture post card addressed to her great-grandmother Mrs. (Ruth) Henry Watson Woods, who lived in Palo Alto, Ca. It was from KFWO radio, located at 352 Clarissa Ave, Avalon, Santa Catalina Island, California. The post card is dated February 4, 1926.

After a little research, I learned that KFWO was built and operated by Major (Jordan) Lawrence Mott who was a wealthy adventure. He was an expert fisherman and author of novels of outdoor life. After much travel around the world he moved to Catalina Island.

He was born Jordan Lawrence Mott III on August 15, 1881 in New York City. The son of Jordan Lawrence Mott Jr. and Katherine Purdy Mott. His grandfather, Jordan Lawrence Mott, Sr. was the owner of J.L. Mott Iron Works in Trenton New Jersey. Mott Jr. was the President of the North American Iron Works, the Star Foundry Company and the North River Bridge Company, all in New York.

Major Mott was an avid outdoorsmen. He traveled throughout the world, hunting and fishing. He became an expert fly fisherman and was highly skilled with hunting guns and bird dogs.

He was a 1905 Harvard graduate and by then married and the father of J.L. Mott IV. While still an undergraduate he began to write short stories and accounts of some of his adventures. Late in 1905 young Mott's first novel "*Jules of the Great Heart*" was published

In 1911 he met and fell in love with a Broadway actress and onetime singer, Frances (Gibson) Hewett Bowne. A short time later, Mott and Frances Hewett Bowne sailed on the British freighter *Indrades* and traveled to the Orient. They ended their journey in Japan where they lived together for two years. The love affair made sensational news back in New York.

During World War I, Mott was commissioned a Major in the U.S. Army Signal Corp and after that wrote sporadically for *Collier's*, *Harper's* and *Sunset* magazines.

In 1918 Major Mott and Frances Hewett Bowne moved to Catalina Island, California. Major Mott finally divorced his wife in 1927 and in October of 1928 married Frances Hewett Bowne.

More information is known and written about Major Mott's time fishing on the Rogue River in Oregon than about his experimental early broadcasts and radio station. In 1923 using almost entirely Western Electric broadcasting tubes and equipment, Mott first broadcasts from Catalina Island in short wave as 6XAD. His transmissions were up to 250 watts and were heard all over the world. He was successful at transmitting, in daylight at the lower wave lengths, across the United States in 1924. He was in constant communication with the Macmillan Polar Expeditions of 1923 to 1924.

From an article dated May 2 1923 in the newspaper "The Catalina Islander" it states the following: "During the radio season beginning October, '22 and ending May 1st 1923 Major Mott has broken all known records in both transmission and reception". The radio signals were heard in Australia and New Zealand, Yokohama and in reliable communication with Honolulu. He was also being heard from Ketchikan Alaska to the coast of South America and easily received in Tahiti, all from the comfort of his own living room.

6XAD eventually became KFWO. From information sent via a Santa Catalina Island Museum, the official start date of radio station KFWO was June 30th 1928. However, our postcard is dated February 6th 1926. The postcard states: "Thank you for your courtesy Dear Friends. We are happy that you enjoy KFWO. Come and see our lovely island"! It is signed, Good Luck, L. Mott.

In a July 20, 2008 posting on Radio-Info BOARDS Jim Hilliker wrote " KFWO was on 1420 kilocycles/khz. with only 250 watts, probably using a flattop wire antenna from Mott's home.

Though the station was on the air a few hours in the daytime, the bulk of its broadcast hours were at night, when the skywave signal was heard often outside of Southern California. Two years later, in 1927, KFWO was moved by the Federal Radio Commission (FRC) from 1420 to 1370-AM, and in 1928, was moved from 1370 kilocycles to 1000 kilocycles. With only a few

hundred stations on the air at that time, KFWO had reception reports from at least 25 states from the west coast to the east coast.”

“This was in the pre-FCC and pre-Federal Radio Commission days, when the Department of Commerce handed out licenses for radio stations to anybody who had the proper equipment and an interest in broadcasting. And, much of what was on the air in 1925 was still non-commercial. Mott, who was a close friend of Catalina Island owner William Wrigley, Jr., used KFWO to promote tourism on the island, using the station slogan taken from the call letters, "Katalina For Wonderful Outings." Besides trying to get more visitors to come to Catalina with special news and talks, Mott used a phone line to broadcast music from the Hotel St. Catherine orchestra a few times each day, along with live music from his home performed by volunteer singers and musicians.”

He began every broadcast with “Hello Dear everybody”. The station also had a number of other slogans “In all the world, no trip is like this” and “ The Isle with a smile.”

In 1929, Major Mott shut down KFWO and moved to Hollywood to return to fishing and writing. Major Mott sold most of his equipment to Santa Ana, California Station KWTC. In 1930 KWTC became KREG. A short time later it was determined that the KFWO equipment was outdated and was soon taken out of service.

Throughout his life, Mott divided his time between radio and his passion for the outdoors. His writing on fishing and conservation were very well received. Two of his “fishing buddies” were famed writers Jack London and Zane Gray. The majestic Rogue River area of Oregon always called to Mott. He was instrumental in setting up fishing camps and promoting the preservation of wild areas.

In 1930, Major Mott became ill. He died of leukemia in 1931 at his fishing camp near the steamboat creek area near Roseberg, Oregon.

Lew Doty



The Lawrence Mott Bridge in Oregon honors his contribution to developing this fishery.

MAXWELL LIBRARY IN HIGH GEAR

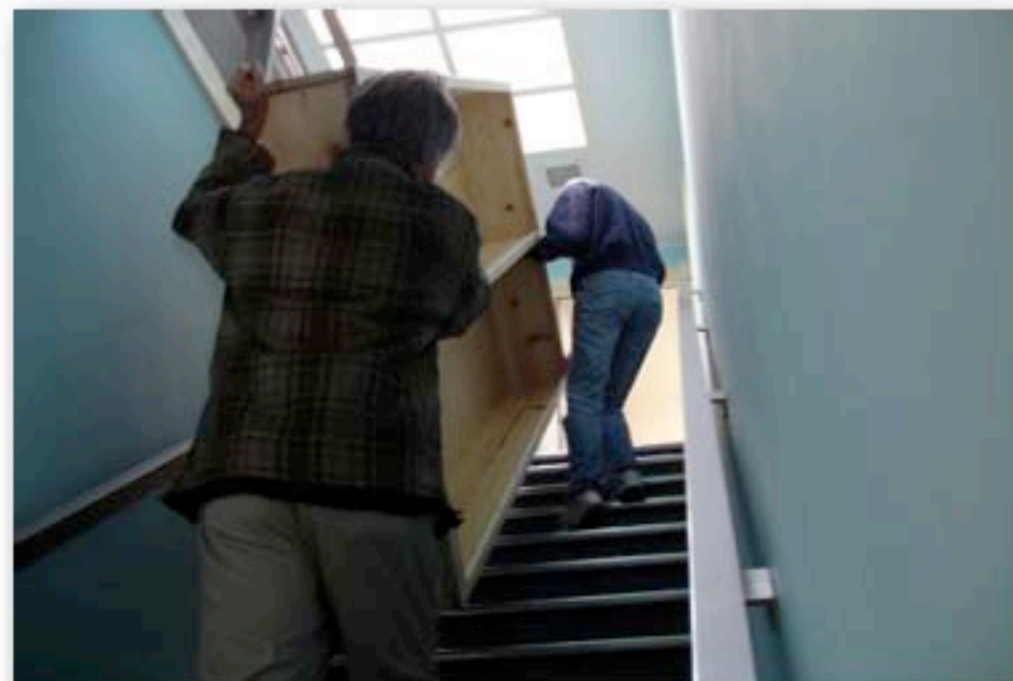
The Maxwell Library at KRE is getting closer to becoming a usable research facility for CHRS members. In January, a second group of shelves was delivered, finished, and installed. Here are a few pictures of just some of the members who have donated their time so freely.



Stonehenge in Berkeley? No, Robert Swart is just fixin' to finish off another batch of bookshelves.



Dave Harris is always hard at work on one project or another at KRE!



Al Norman is probably wondering if someone made the stairs steeper since the last trip up.

NEW FACTS ABOUT OLD RADIO

Will Rayment introduced us to the "mysterious" Berkeley radio in the last issue of the Signal. Since then, he has learned quite a bit more about this rare bird. Here's his report.



Some of the mysteries surrounding the un named "Berkeley Radio" have been solved. Recent names involved in phone calls, etc, seeking answers include ... Art Leberman, Paulee Jackson, Don Steger, Robin Spaulding, Andrew Watry, and finally the Son of Wave Miller ... Steve Miller.

Steve Miller has in his possession a "Life Story of Wave Miller", which was written by Wave Miller in 1976. Steve read it over the phone (to me) the whole story which was fascinating. But only a short part of it addresses the nameless mystery radio. So that is all I will include in this update. By the way, Steve Miller helped me greatly on this final draft.

On Dec. 7th upon the USA entering WWII, Wave Miller, and his wife, had a strong feeling that Radio Tubes for civilian use would soon become rare (and he was right). He rented a small factory space at 144 12th St. in Oakland. It was only 15 feet by 50 feet long. He then went out and bought all the Radio Tubes he could find, and set up a Radio Parts Wholesale Distributorship.

During the war, Wave and his wife were divorced, and his ex-wife took over the radio parts business, which became Miller Radio & TV. Wave moved to Berkeley and rented a store on Ashby Ave. (across from what is now the BART parking lot). He did repair work for the Navy until the end of the war.

At the end of WWII (1945), Wave realized there was an acute shortage of small AM Radios, so he bought parts to produce 1000 sets. He decided he had to get into the business of manufacturing quickly before the large companies like RCA convert from War products to home products.

He set his plan in motion in 1946 with a target of building his first production run. Big Problem!! He couldn't get enough ganged variable capacitors fast enough (he called them "tuners"). He tried to make some tuners, but in his words, they weren't very good.

Big companies like RCA were soon back in home product production. Wave Miller's own words were "Our big plan turned out to be a disaster!" Wave stopped all production on the little radio.

In 1948, Wave joined with 3 San Francisco financial backers to start "Bay Television," a company designed to provide TV repair service for Television Retailers like Sears, etc. But the big Retailers soon set up their own repair facilities, so, in 1951 they liquidated "Bay Television".

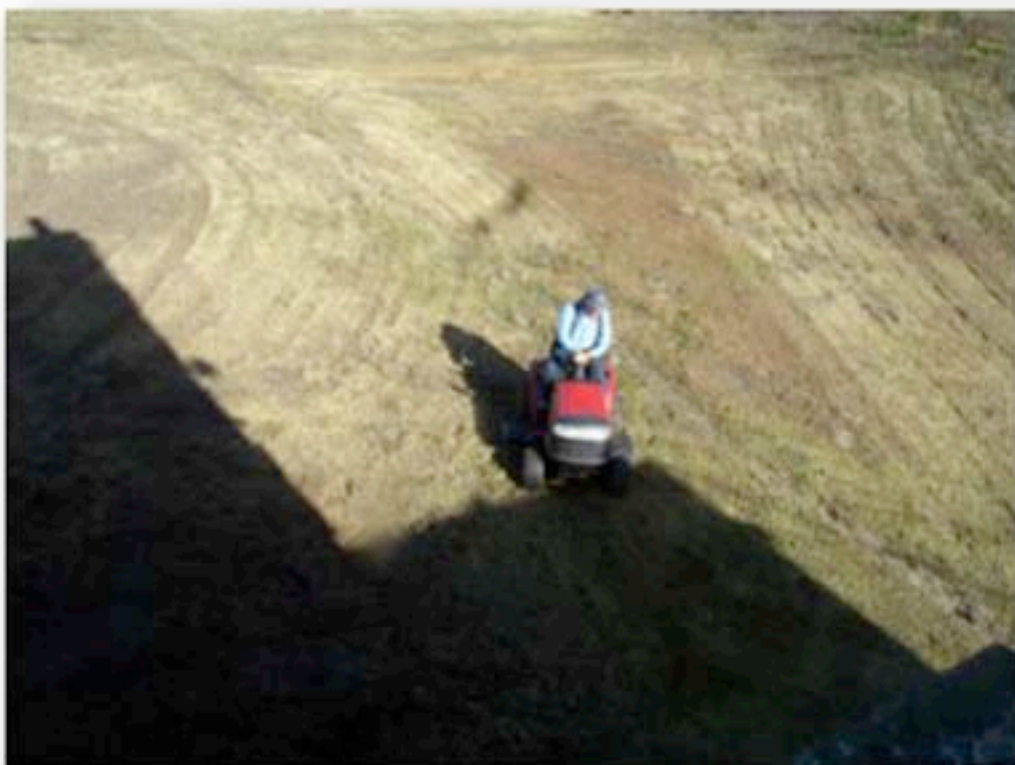
Will Rayment

YARDBIRDS

It turns out that all of the hard work that CHRS volunteers have put into the improvement and upkeep of the KRE grounds is paying off in an unexpected way. Not only does the place look great to us, it seems to be attracting visiting wildlife. A couple of Canada Geese showed up and have been here since early last fall! Radio-minded CHRS president Steve Kushman named them George and Gracie.



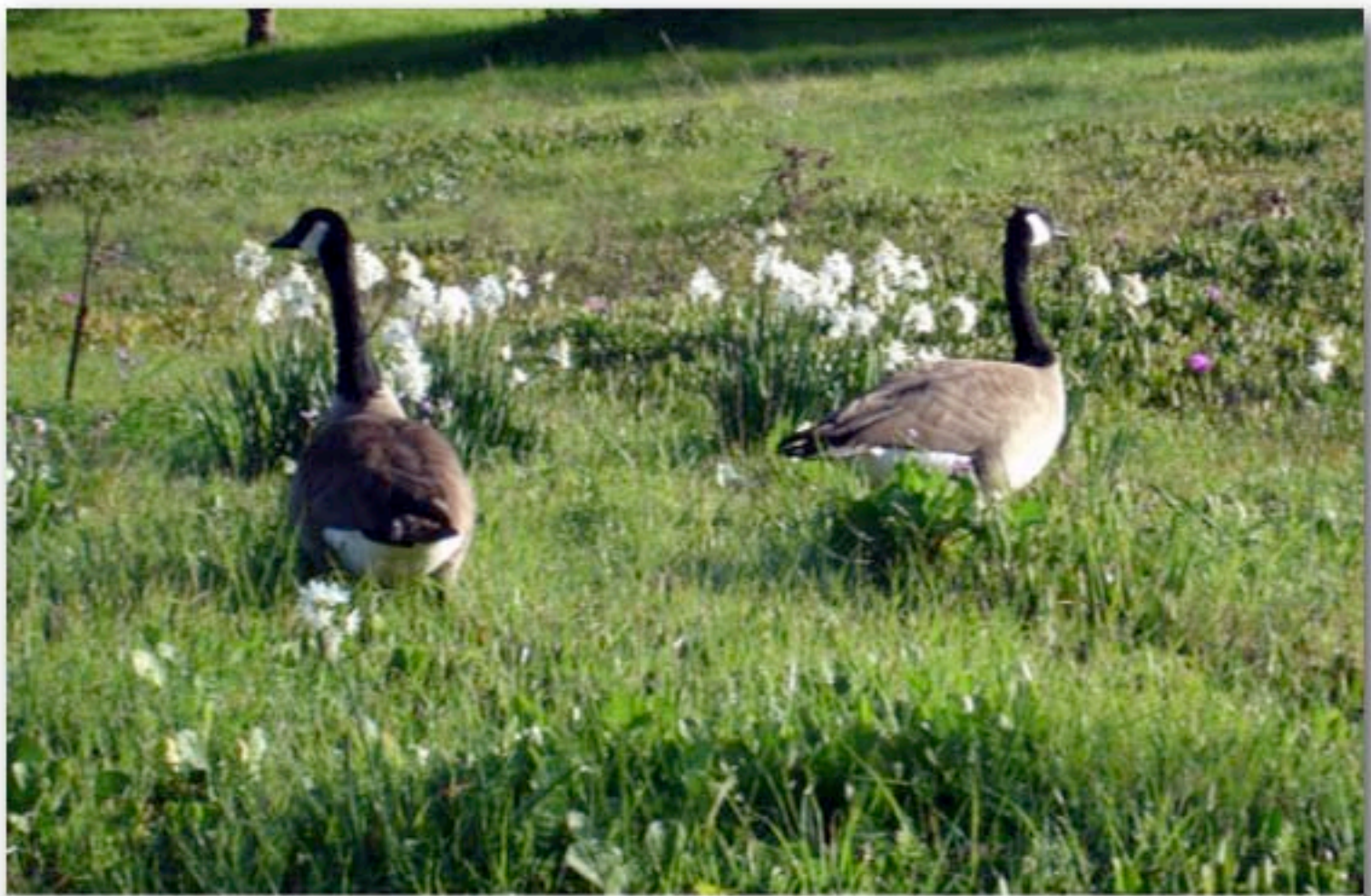
Lea McCall, Janice Kushman and others continue to fight back the stalky Society Garlic, one miserable plant at a time. "Ongoing" is a key word for volunteers at KRE.



Larry Drees works tirelessly to keep the KRE property looking like a well maintained park.



The cleaned and preened KRE grounds beckoned this elegant Blue Heron



Love in bloom! After taking a gander at the KRE grounds, Gracie decided to stay. George isn't arguing.



Workshop Fun

On January 3rd, another radio repair clinic was held in the CHRS workshop in the KRE building. Not only are these clinics a great help to those of us who don't yet have a great level of electronics expertise, they are always a lot of fun.

In addition to the instruction time that is volunteered by CHRS members, the effort to sort and organize the radio parts and test gear donated to CHRS continues on a regular basis.



The "antenna training" class has been quite a success. For some reason, no one wants to take "ground training"



Whatever it is, it's certainly amusing this bunch!

Emerson
**QUALITY
RADIO TUBES**

for MIRACLE TONE



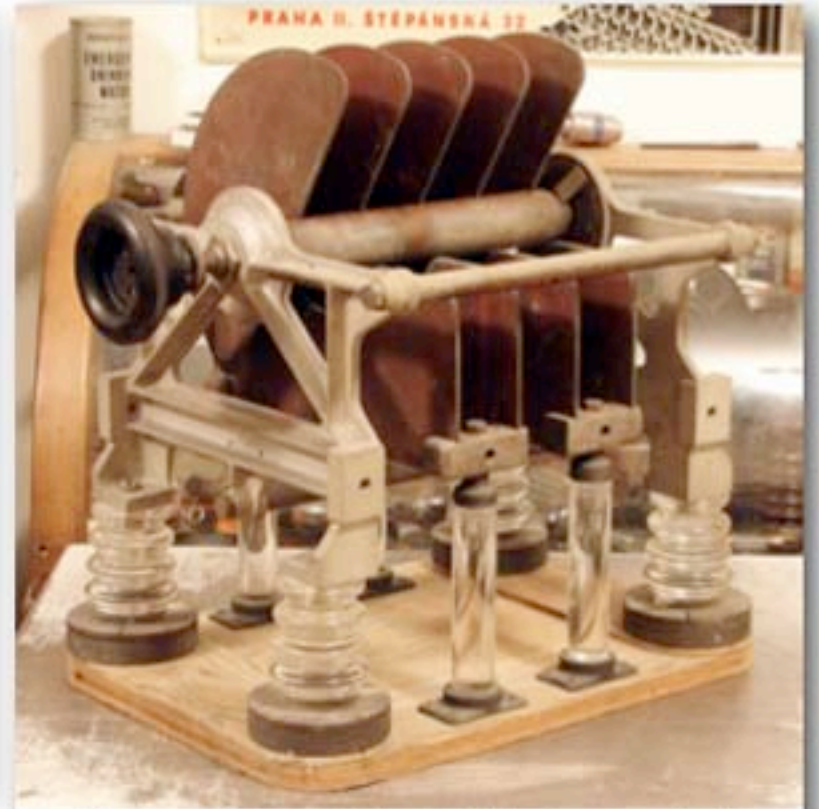
EMERSON QUALITY TUBES — Have been designed by foremost engineers to IMPROVE radio reception from the basic standpoints of sensitivity, selectivity and TONE . . . They are FACTORY TESTED and mechanically and electrically perfect, with the qualities which assure long life and dependability under all conditions. They make ANY radio a BETTER set.

Emerson Tubes carry the Emerson warranty of uniform quality in every respect.

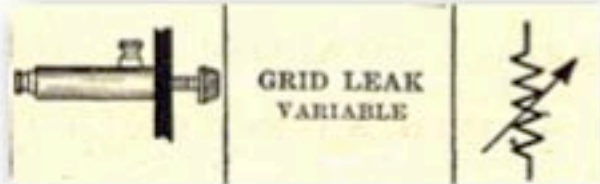
When buying tubes, INSIST upon EMERSON



Bart Lee and Dennis Monticelli sort tubes donated to CHRS.
You can't pick these up at Radio Shack!



You can't cop "diminished capacity"
with this bad boy! You don't want to
see the coil that goes with it.



This 1917 photo shows the delivery of a new-fangled Victrola

Busy Saturday in February

February 7th was a big day at KRE. The weather cooperated with plans for our vintage radio swap meet. We had a great turnout for that event and, thereafter, a presentation was given by Roy Trumbull, Chief Engineer of KRE from 1968 to 1971, Art Lebermann, who held the post from 1971 to 1987, and Paul Marks, the current Chief Engineer. The talk was varied and interesting. We were all agog at the tales of antennas falling down, being dismantled, and arising again. I, for one, looked up at that 449 foot mast with a new respect for the hard and dangerous work that goes into such a feat of engineering.



Great turnout and a lot of enthusiasm at February 7th swap meet



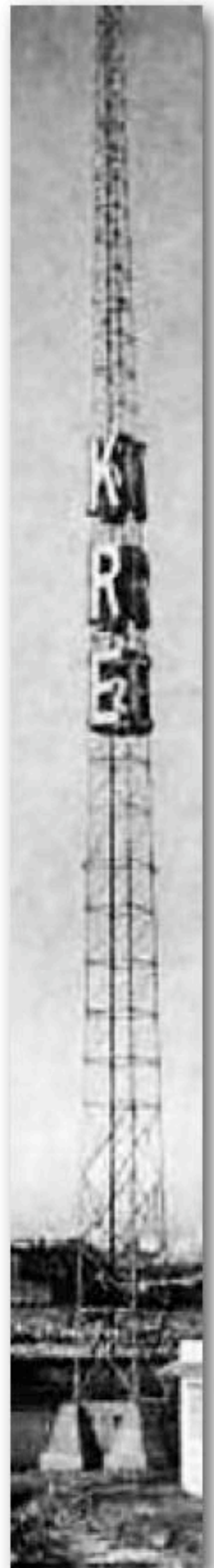
"Lew, if you throw in one of those little dogs, I'll buy ALL your radios!"



After the swap meet on February 7th, CHRS members were treated to a panel discussion of the triumphs and foibles of 40 years of engineering at KRE.



Roy Trumbull, Art Lebermann, and Paul Marks swap memories of their combined 40 years at KRE



CHRS



SOME NOTES FROM CHRS PRESIDENT STEVE KUSHMAN

FIRST OF ALL...

I want to thank **Rod Wentler** for another fine edition of the "CHRS Signal". The "CHRS Signal" really brings home the point that CHRS is way more than just swap meets. Thanks Rod!

RENEWALS

You should have received your 2009 renewal forms a while ago. Also included is a newsletter and a 2009 event schedule. These were sent by snail mail. Not always the most reliable. If you did not receive one please let us know. Email our Membership Chairman **Jaime Arbona** at jaime@inlanguageradio.com and one will be mailed to you.

DONATIONS

Remember that CHRS does not exist by dues alone. We are always very pleased to announce new names that will be added to the donors plaque in the KRE lobby. This means that at least a \$1000 donation has been made to the CHRS/KRE Restoration & Museum Fund. So we give a big Thank You to enthusiastic new member **Jack Bethards**, champion of the CHRS vacuum tube collection **Dennis Monticelli** and CHRS old timer and all around nice guy **George Patterson** for their recent very generous contributions. CHRS is grateful for your support.

CHRS/KRE FUTURE

The appraisal is in on the KRE building and the 4.5 acre site. Stay tuned as we come to terms with ICBC and agree on a purchase price. Then it's time to contact your rich uncles as we start filling up the CHRS/KRE Building Acquisition Fund. It's going to be an exciting time for CHRS. And, owning KRE means the future of CHRS and the CHRS Museum & Educational Center for Radio, is secure. Besides, CHRS has too much great gear in our collection to even think about moving.

REQUESTS FROM OUR AMATEUR RADIO COMMITTEE

For the next phase of the CHRS Amateur Radio Plan at KRE we need the following: A dual band VHF/UHF fiberglass vertical amateur band antenna & a Polyphaser. If anyone has these items to donate, please let us know.

SILENT KEYS

It's always tough when we lose CHRS members. So sadly we must report the passing of three. We mourn the loss and celebrate the lives of long time CHRS members **John T. Mark** and **Warren Porter** of Paradise and tube guru and publisher of the "Vacuum Tube Valley" magazine, **Charlie Kittleson** of Lakeport. John and Warren led very long full lives into their 90s. But, our friend Charlie left us much too young and way too early. We will miss them dearly and wish their families well during these times.

BY THE WAY...

We wish to thank **Warren Porter's** family for donating all his radios and radio stuff to CHRS. It was a big effort to move the collection to the Bay Area. We needed a 17 foot truck for the job. Thanks to **Bill Wray**, **Dale Tucker**, **Jim Latendorf**, **Jerry Cantou**, **Scott Robinson** and **Bill Voigt** for their help. You will see some of Warren's collection at KRE in the future and some will be sold at our events. Scott Robinson has already restored a vintage Roberts portable from Warren's collection. It's on display and working just fine.

Until next time... Best Regards, Steve



Signing off...

Well, another Signal finally makes it to the press room. It has been a delight to receive articles from CHRS members. I try to keep my editorial pencil in the drawer, so please feel free to contribute! As always, comments and suggestions are welcome.

Rod Wentler

rodwentler@yahoo.com