

The **Call**
Letter

August, 2008
Vol. 34 — No. 8



Over **30** years in print!

The Northwest Vintage Radio Society

Post Office Box 82379
Portland, Oregon 97282-0379

The Northwest Vintage Radio Society is a non-profit historical society incorporated in the State of Oregon. Since 1974 the Society has been dedicated to the preservation and enjoyment of "Vintage radio" and wireless equipment.

Membership in the Society is open to all who are actively interested in historic preservation. The dues are \$25.00 for domestic membership, due on January 1st of each year (prorated quarterly).

The *Call Letter* has been a monthly publication since 1974. It was originated with the founder, Bob Bilbie, and our first president, Harley Perkins. Through several editors and with the assistance of numerous society members, the *Call Letter* has continued to be a publication that informs members of the society's business and that supports the hobby of collecting, preserving, and restoring vintage radios.

Society meetings are held the second Saturday of each month at the Abernethy Grange Hall at 15745 S. Harley Ave. in Oregon City, Oregon. They convene at or about 10 AM for the purpose of displaying radios, conducting Society business, and exchanging information. Guests are welcome at all Society meetings and functions (except board meetings).

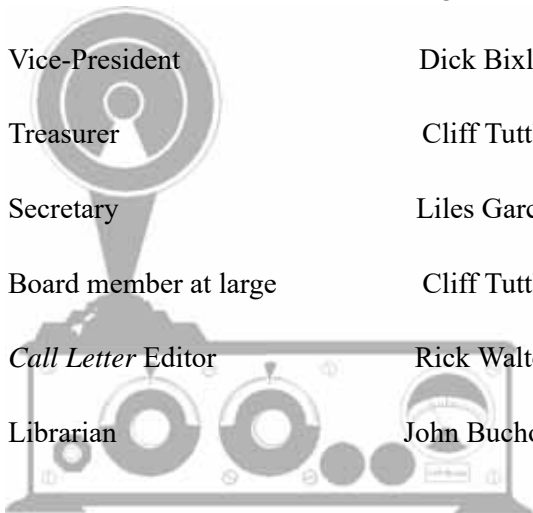
Other Society functions include guest speakers, auctions, radio shows, and radio sales which are advertised in the *Call Letter* and are held in and around Portland.

With each issue of the *Call Letter*, we remember Jim Mason, a charter member of the society who remained active until his death in 1999. A generous bequest from Jim's estate ensures the vitality of the Northwest Vintage Radio Society, and continued publication of the *Call Letter*.



Society Officers for 2008:

President	George Kirkwood	(503) 648-4809 radiogeo@hevanet.com
Vice-President	Dick Bixler	(503) 690-2557 rf2af@verizon.net
Treasurer	Cliff Tuttle	(503) 666-7005 kiptuttle@comcast.net
Secretary	Liles Garcia	(503) 649-9288 landn2@verizon.net
Board member at large	Cliff Tuttle	(503) 666-7005 kiptuttle@comcast.net
<i>Call Letter</i> Editor	Rick Walton	(503) 656-4104 rwalton@easystreet.net
Librarian	John Bucholtz	(360) 693-7135 BonJonBuck@webtv.net



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On the cover: “Our colorful cover this month is from the August, 1929 issue of *Radio News*. That cover was taken from a painting by Howard H. Brown. It is among the early issues of *Radio News* edited by Arthur H. Lynch, who replaced Hugo Gernsback in the wake of financial difficulties.

The next meeting is on August 9, 2008.

**The Program Topic for our August meeting will be
“Radiola Radios.”**

Visit our web site at <http://nwvrs.org>.

Next Call Letter Deadline: September 4, 2008.

The *Call Letter* is the official publication of the Northwest Vintage Radio Society. Circulation is limited to the membership and guests of the Society. The Society is not responsible for the material contributed for publication, nor the quality, timeliness, or accuracy of the items or services offered for sale in the SWAP SHOP. By common agreement of the board of directors, the buyer assumes all responsibility for the satisfaction of any transaction.

From the Editor

by Call Letter Editor, Rick Walton

“What is the occasion?” you might ask because we’ve printed this month’s *Call Letter* in color. Not just the cover, but all of it! Cliff Tuttle was able to acquire a color laser printer for the club at very low price from the “estate sale” at Pope and Talbot, Cliff’s employer. This is a wonderful acquisition and will allow more color issues of the *Call Letter* than just Christmas and Valentine’s day.

How many of you noticed that you received two May issues of the *Call Letter*, one in May and the other in June? You weren’t supposed to, of course, but your editor goofed and left May, 2008 on the June *Call Letter*.

This month, in addition to all the usual items, we have a piece from Dick Karman that presents a summary of the club presidents since the founding in 1974. Check it out - there is some interesting club history.

This month’s *In the Shack* outlines the brief history of the highly decorated front panels on some battery radios of the ‘20s. As always, Mike spins an interesting yarn along with the radio history.

Sinatra, Bennett,
Norah.

Portland's only station for classic American standards
of yesterday and today. Sunny 1550 KKAD.

Listen online at: www.sunny1550kkad.com



NWVRS Calendar of Events

Most of the hamfest and ham swap meet information comes from:
PNW Hamfair web page at www.n7cfo.com/amradio/hf/hf.htm

- August 1-3** Pacific Northwest DX Convention. Monarch Hotel, Portland, OR. Hosted by the Willamette Valley DX Club. www.wvdx.org.
- August 9** NWVRS monthly meeting 10 am; tailgate swap 8:30.
- August 16** Antique Radio Swap Meet. Puget Sound Antique Radio Association. 9 AM to 1 PM. Shoreline museum parking lot. N. 175th & Linden, Avenue, North Seattle. One block west of Aurora Avenue - one mile west of I-5, exit 176. Free admission. <http://www.eskimo.com/~hhsagen/psara/swap.html> (Always the 3rd Sunday in August)
- August 16** W7PL Pendleton ARC Second Annual Swapmeet. SW 13th St. & Emigrant, Pendleton, OR. Free admission. For table information, contact denton@oregontrail.net. <http://w7pl.com/>.
- September 13** NWVRS monthly meeting 10 am; tailgate swap 8:30.
- September 27** Spokane Hamfest. University High School, 12420 E 32nd Ave, Spokane Valley WA 99216. For more info contact Bryan, K7WXO at k7wxo@gktech.net
- October 11** NWVRS Fall Swap/Sale at Aurora American Legion Hall, Aurora, Oregon.
- October 11** North Kitsap ARC Hamfest and Electronics Swapmeet. Bremerton, WA at the President's Hall – Kitsap County Fairgrounds. \$5.00 admission, \$15.00/Table. For more information: <http://www.nkarc.org/hamfest.html> or e-mail kb2skp@arrl.net
- October 25** **Swaptoberfest**. Mid-Valley ARES. Polk County Fairgrounds, Rickreall, OR. Contact: Chris Portal, W7CLP (503)559-7837. w7clp@arrl.net. 520 South Pacific Highway. <http://www.swaptoberfest.net>

- October 25** Mount Baker Amateur Radio Club Flea Market, Lynden, WA. Always the last Saturday in October. Contact k7iey@netscape.net; <http://www.qsl.net/k7skw/>.
- November 8** NWVRS monthly meeting 10 am; tailgate swap 8:30. Officer nominations for 2009.
- December 13** NWVRS monthly meeting 10 am; tailgate swap 8:30. Officer elections, annual Holiday party.

NorthWest Vintage Radio Society Meeting Minutes

Liles Garcia, NWVRS Secretary

President George Kirkwood called the July 12, 2008 meeting of the NorthWest Vintage Radio Society to order at 10:00 AM. Liles Garcia read the minutes of the last meeting. There is one correction to the June minutes: Cliff Tuttle is not our “temporary Treasurer”; he is our Society’s Treasurer. The minutes were approved with this correction. Cliff Tuttle gave the Treasurer’s report; it was approved as provided by Cliff. Our Society now has 99 members. Cliff is currently updating the signature cards and contact information for our Society. Members gave Cliff a round of applause for all of his great work. Ed Montgomery and David Neese attended today as guests. Welcome Ed and David! Vice President Dick Bixler said that Don Iverson recently had surgery and is recovering. John Bucholtz said that our library is doing fine. There were approximately 46 people at our meeting today.

New Business

Signature Authority--Rick Walton moved to give Society officers George Kirkwood, Richard Bixler, John Clifford Tuttle, and Stuart L. Garcia, Jr. signature authority for NorthWest Vintage Radio Society as it relates to Wells Fargo (checking account), First Investor (Jim Mason Fund) and US Postal Service (Post Office box). Rick’s motion was seconded and passed by a “show of hands” majority vote.

Leads and Needs

Debbie Hillman needs a Variac. Ed Montgomery needs an oscillator coil similar to one found in an AA5 radio and an isolation transformer. Dick Bixler needs four flat brown/tan plastic push-on knobs.

Program Topic

The program topic for today was “Exhibitor’s Choice”. Members showed and discussed the radios that they brought. The program topic for August is “Radiola Radios”.

Brian Nies needs a ride to our Society meetings. He lives in Sherwood; and his phone number is (503)233-4405.

The meeting was adjourned.

Photo Display

Photos by Rick Walton

These are the radios displayed at the July meeting for “Exhibitor’s Choice.”



Steinite Mod. 990
Alan Shaddock



Zenith 805
Blake Dietze



RCA Victor
Mike McCrow



Admiral 770CG
Sonny Clutter



Jackson CRT Tester
Sonny Clutter



Parrot + tiny toy radio
Sonny Clutter



Neutrowound Super-Six
George Kirkwood



Coggins Condenser
Art Redman



Radio Specialty Forest Svc. Mod. 16
Art Redman & Jay Johnston



National FB7
Mark Richardson



Coastal Navigator
Direction Finder
Kurt Torgerson



Silvertone 101-653
Larry Tobkin



Majestic Havenwood
Rick Walton



RCA Victor Mod. R225
Bill Meloy



Zenith Royal 50
Bill Meloy



Troy Mod. 444
Bill Meloy

Presidents from the Past

by Dick Karman

The NW Vintage Radio Society began in 1974. Bob Bilbie and his wife Sandy, living in Oregon City, were the catalyst to get collectors together. Although he founded the group, Bob Bilbie did not become the first president. Harley Perkins took that office in 1974. Harley was contacted a few years ago and is still living in Massachusetts, and is still interested in pipe organs and old radios. Our first VP was Pete Young, who also is credited with inviting Tom James and several other members to the society.

In the first anniversary edition of the group's newsletter Bob Campbell was listed as the president. Bob Campbell was not included in the original constitution as a charter member, but some think that might have been an error. Never-the-less he has been around the society for 34 years.

Both Bob Bilbie and Bob Campbell were nominated for the position of President in 1976. By all reports it was not an amicable election and some thought that Bob Campbell's loss was not altogether on the straight and narrow. When all was said and done Bilbie got his time in the president's seat.

Bob Bilbie only served as president from January through May of 1976. Suddenly, without a word to most of the members, he resigned from his office as president, from his position as editor, and from the club, citing health issues. Then vice president Tom James received the May newsletter from Bilbie's own hand but got no further explanation. Tom served the remainder of the term.

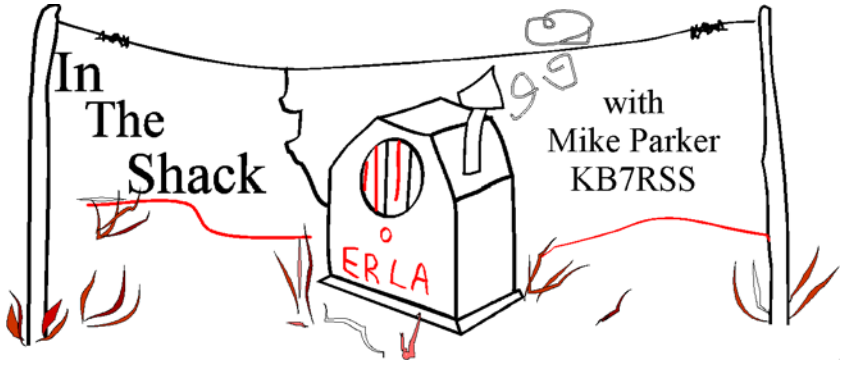
Tom James continued to hold the high office for 1977 and 1978. Tom was a selfless and thoughtful worker. Ed Charman remembered him as a consummate radio builder. Tom knew work-arounds for many of the plagues that haunted old radios. Jim Mason took the office for 1979. His vice-president, John Wood, was in charge of meetings back in those days too. John found the demands of work and family issues caused him to miss meetings and he felt he had to resign his office in May. For the balance of the year Craig Hoaglin filled the VP shoes and also took the presidency in 1980.

Don Iverson was elected for the 1981 term as president. Bill Devey agreed to take the job for 1982. In 1983 Jerry Talbott was elected. The society had experienced growth and an increase in membership. Jerry returned as president for 1984, Dick Karman followed him in '85 and '86. During Dick's terms we were reaching for more public displays and recognition. Ray Nelson was president in 1987. Dan Howard was elected for the '88 and '89 terms. Most probably for lack of opposition, Dick Karman came back for the 1990 and 1991 terms. Speed Feldshau, who hailed from Keizer, Oregon, was in office for '92 and '93. Ed Pittaway donated his time as president in 1994.

Greg Bonn, a member of the Oregon Historic Electric Railway preservation group (the trolley club) became a member in 1994. He wanted help the Society "get organized and grow." He took the office of president '95 and '96. We printed an advertising brochure, tried circulating our swap meets to more public venues and got some publicity during those years. We did managed to pick up some new members, but Greg retired from the presidency and from the society in 1997. Jerry Talbott assumed the gavel again for his third term in the office in 1997.

Dave Rutland took the office in 1998, and Charlie Kent finished out the century with a record breaking (at the time) three consecutive terms. Charlie took office in 1999, and held the office until January of 2002, when he turned the presidential duties over to his wife Wendy Johnson-Kent. The Society had its first woman president.

Cliff Tuttle handled the duties for 2003 and 2004. In 2005 George Kirkwood assumed the office and continues to hold it to the present, his four consecutive terms in office setting a new record.



Editor's note: This "In The Shack" article is from the January, 2000, Call Letter!

All That Glitters is Gold



Ever since the start of my interest in 1920's radios, I have been fascinated, no, make that distracted, by the various and seldom seen battery set models with the so called "illustrated" front panels. These are also referred to as "art panel" or "decorative panel" sets. They are scarce today for two reasons: they were only sold for a short time and with age and use, the gold etching tended to rub off, leaving them very ugly.

Apparently not much is known about how this "fad" came about. I call it a fad because that is exactly what it turned out to be. Highly significant of the rollicking "Roaring 20's" it came and went in a period of less than a year while radio design was in an extreme state of change and advancement. In fact, one could say that the illustrated panel fad lasted for a shorter time than some of the other well known fads of the 20's such as raccoon coats and goldfish swallowing!

The quest for decorating the radio front panel, which I estimate to have begun in mid-1925, was simply due to the hundreds of previously offered radio sets, especially after the large influx of "3-dialers" that appeared in 1924. Before that, the industry was just figuring out how to get the wire connection posts around to the back or inside of the set and how to eliminate the myriad of knobs, dials and peep holes for tube lights. As the home radio became more of a visible household item, the demand increased for a look that did not represent an electrical item sitting on a shelf in a science laboratory.

But even by the 1924-25 season, literally hundreds of factory production radios were offered with a plain Bakelite front panel, 3 tuning knobs, two rheostat knobs, a switch and the jacks. The manufacturers name and/or the model and sometimes the company location was engraved someplace on the panel and that was all! After all the fuss about cleaning up the front of the set, they still turned out these plain jane 3-dialers by the hundreds.

Meanwhile the "art nouveau" era was in full swing. Decorative filigree was found on everything: books, literature, record labels, note paper, announcements. Before the Frank Lloyd Wright school of design, they were hanging on to the

Victorian era of over decorating everything. Buildings were built with elaborate cornices and overhangs depicting this extravagance. Why not a radio?

Why not? In 1925, a company called Insuline, who manufactured radio panels was experimenting with a process of etching gold on to their material. Although the panel material was called “Insuline” by them, they also implied that the same process could be applied to Bakelite. The first radio to be offered with this Insuline process was the “Newlands” 3-dialer, sold only by the Incandescent Supply Co. of New York City. Insuline’s “Etch-O-Gravure” process was demonstrated quite well on this model, which I have in my collection, with a chain of fleur-de-lis like etching draped across the top of the panel and dropped down between the tuning dials. Around the switch, centered in the lower middle of the panel, is the word “Newlands” in stretched lettering with some fancy filigree on each side of the word and bold lightning bolts projecting in all degrees upward from the switch. Even though the set was an ordinary Freshman type 3-dialer marketed by an obscure distributing jobber, I suspect it sold fairly well just because of the new departure in panel decorations. Another company offering this process was the Formica Insulation Co., with their “Veri-Chrome” process.



In early 1926, Crosley perpetuated the fad and boldly introduced the fantastic RFL-60 and RFL-75 model radios. These were not touted as their main radio offered, but more of something extra, the circuit inside and the decorative look outside. This panel is absolutely stunning, with a gold etched on Bakelite woodland scene complete with scantily clad “nymphs” depicting music and dancing and listening. One nymph is shown playing a horn and in the background are trees and hills and a wire fence bobbing over the hills. Far away city buildings are shown behind the hills. The knobs have protruding pointers of gold similar to an old fashioned clock hand pointing to the etched gold numerals on the panel. A good view of this amazing set can be seen in the video, “Empire of the Air” which aired on PBS several years ago. Ironically, later on in 1926, Crosley re-designed both models with plain, wood grained front panels. Talk about a “flash in the pan” and it was over, that quick.

But not so with other companies, Midwest Radio dressed up their Miraco Ultra-5 set with a very nice gold on Bakelite design depicting a seascape scene with the ocean on the left and a beach and hills leading to a fantastic castle on the right with turrets. This set was offered in 1927 with a carry-over model sold at a reduced price in 1928, long after the fad had gone.

The Westingale radio of 1926, a short lived company, offered a 2 dial set with an ocean scene with ships, I have never seen one other than a poor picture of it. Another well known illustrated panel set, which sold quite well was the Metrodyne Super Seven. This rather innovative set used one dial tuning with a lighted drum dial and had a very fantastic etched gold panel depicting what I think is an Egyptian temple scene with scantily clad girls kneeling on a tile floor, the tile squares making up most of the lower part of the panel. The girls are kneeling on each side of a cauldron, with the "Metrodyne Single Dial" name on the side of it. One can see the very detailed columns in the room from floor to ceiling and the detailed ceiling arches make up the top portion of the picture. The volume knob, off to the right, is pictured inside of a huge pendant, with fancywork surrounding the knob and two chains suspending it from the ceiling. Just simply beautiful! But by the 1927-28 season, it too was history, replaced by a woodgrain panel! Another illustrated set was the Northland 3-dial, from Minnesota. It portrayed a deep North woods scene with evergreen trees etched on the panel. Quite appropriate for a set from Minnesota, yah. Stewart-Warner also used their dancing girls scene, found on some of their speakers, on the panel of their higher priced consoles. There are other illustrated sets, I am sure, yet to be discovered.

But the radio that really took me by surprise was the Masterphone, made in Iowa City, Iowa (see photos).



This was offered for sale last summer on Sonny Clutter's excellent website, www.radiolaguy.com and did not last very long because I bought it! After being caught up in this illustrated panel set craze for so long and frustrated at not finding a good example for sale, I bit the bullet and hauled out enough dough to purchase it. I am not sorry...it is really an eye catcher. The gold etched Bakelite panel depicts what looks like a Medieval European woodland village and is so detailed that I am still finding things in it I did not see at first. A friend looked at it and immediately spotted a rustic bridge, over a creek in the scene that I had overlooked. One marvels at the extreme detail used by the artists of these panel illustrations.



The Masterphone is also unusual because I can find no mention of the name or the company in any of the sources available so far. It is just an ordinary 5 tube TRF 3-dial set that happens to have an extremely attractive illustrated panel. The cabinet and the entire look of the radio however, is a blatant rip-off of the Crosley RFL-75 art panel set and I can imagine that Powell Crosley had more than a few words with Masterphone about it....maybe even ceased their production! I hope to find more info about this set and that should be a real challenge for this millennium.

And so I say.... as for the short lived illustrated radio panel fad....All that glitters, IS gold! Happy 25th anniversary, NWVRS! QSO you next time.....IN THE SHACK Mike Parker.

Voilà

...new and recent finds by NVRS members

Compiled by Jay Johnston

Vance Daberko —Discovered in the shed of a nice old gentleman in Wren, OR: RCA Stratoworld multiband portable, Arvin Hopalong Cassidy table radio, assorted bakelite radios, a 1947 Fender Deluxe Woody” guitar amplifier, Rockola jukebox amplifier, Navy transmitter with plug-ins, test equipment, coil winder, lots of tubes, parts, Radio magazines, and much more. It was a wonderful find!

Frank Olberding —Fada 192-A “Neutrolette”, 1925 3 dial 5 tube battery radio, working condition

R. E. Thompson S-60 “Parlor Grand”, 1925 3 dial 5 tube battery radio, working condition

Rick Walton —Majestic Havenwood with Model 15 chassis (see Photo Display). Uses “spray-shield” tubes for IF and 2nd detector.

Bendix 55L3U all-American 5 plaskon table model.

Swap Shop

FOR SALE: Thousands of tubes, hundreds of radio parts, panels, meters, surplus, etc. R5-D3 electronic surplus, Bob Lee, 9770 S.E. Stanley Ave., Milwaukie, OR 97222, (503) 513-0410

FREE to a good home: **1939 Philco 39-40** console, cabinet good, needs new dial glass, some repair work already done, hums. **1931 Zenith 11** lowboy console, complete basket case. Neither radios working. I can deliver to the August meeting for pickup. Tony H. abhauser@aol.com or 503-397-0074

Radio Service

These members have indicated they are willing to perform radio repairs:

Roger Brown – (503) 693-6089

Blake Dietze – (360) 944-7172, wb6jbj@ix.netcom.com

Todd Ommert – (503) 246-4141, website www.burlingame-radio.com

Tony Ranft – (360) 944-8489 or ranft@saw.net – General repairs.

Dave Wise – (503) 648-0897, david_wise@phoenix.com

If you are willing to repair radios, give your name, phone and/or e-mail, and any comments to the *Call Letter* editor.

The Northwest Vintage Radio Society is not responsible in any disputes arising from services provided by members listed here. By common agreement of the board of directors, the buyer assumes all responsibility for the satisfaction of any transaction.

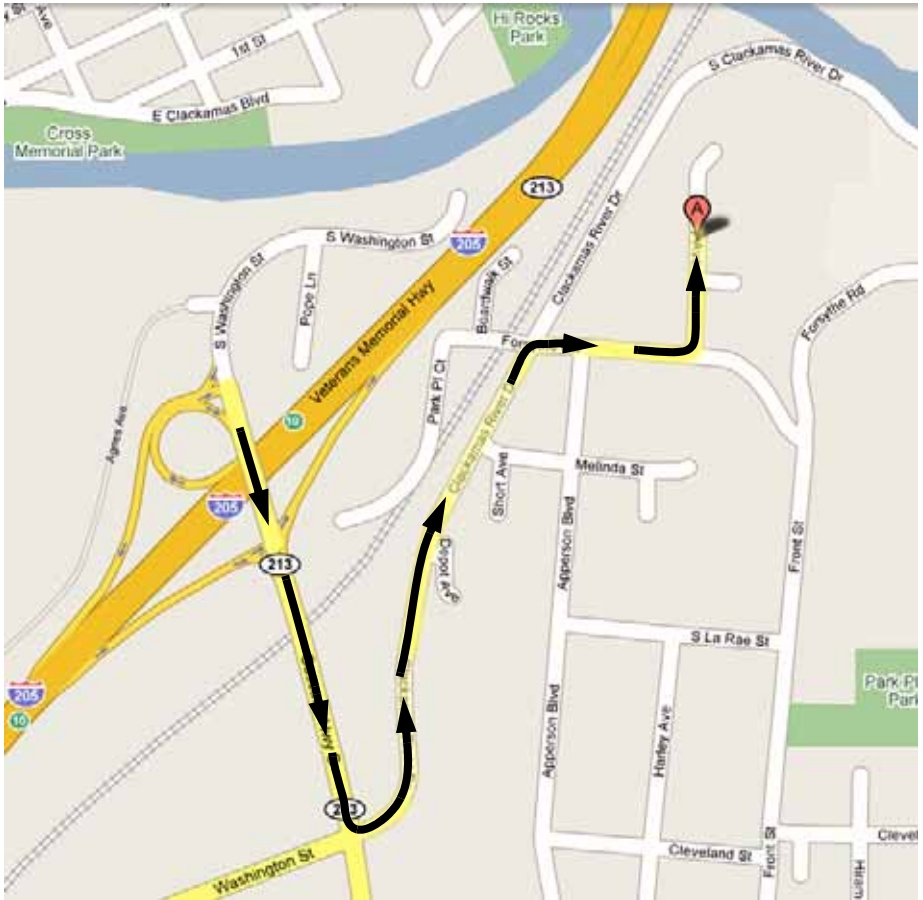
Leads and Needs

Questions about restoration of vintage radio? Visit radiolaguy's web site often for this information plus lots of other interesting displays, photo's, virtual museum plus lots of other information on vintage radio and television. Oh, yes, there are items for sale as well and NVRS members get a substantial discount on most of these items. Thank You, Sonny the Radiola Guy
Visit my vintage radio web site: <http://www.radiolaguy.com>

From Rudy Zvarich: A friend wishes to give "free" to a good home a Zenith Stereo console, model # ML267OW, as in Sam's folder # 682-13, with record player, AM - FM receiver all in a like new cabinet. I believe he is the original owner. I'll have it's picture at the Saturday meeting. Interested parties should phone Frank Cevic @ 503-620-9540 for an appointment.

Meeting Location

Here is a map (thanks to Google Maps) to the Abernethy Grange Hall (the pointer marked “A”), where the Northwest Vintage Society meets the second Saturday of each month. Just follow the arrows on the map.



To get to the Abernethy Grange Hall:

1. Exit I-205 at SR-213 (Exit 10 to Molalla) and head south on 213.
2. At the first intersection (the traffic light), turn left onto Clackamas River Dr.
3. Turn right at Forsythe Rd.
4. Turn left onto Harley Ave. The Grange Hall is on the left about a block and a half.