

The

# Call Letter

of the Northwest Vintage Radio Society

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Vol. 24

August 1998

No. 8

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12HO92R

**Can you date this Zenith console from the model number.  
See page 3!**

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In print since 1974

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# The Northwest Vintage Radio Society

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 \$15.00 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 members of the *Call Letter* has continued to be a publication that both informs members of the society's business and that has supported the hobby of collecting, preserving, and restoring vintage radios.

Society meetings are held the second Saturday of each month (except July and August) at the Buena Vista Club House at 16th & Jackson Streets 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 show, and radio sales which are advertised in the *Call Letter* and are held in and around Portland.

## Society Officers:

President	David Rutland	(541) 929-4498
Vice-President	George Kirkwood	(503) 648-4809
Treasurer	Ed Charman	(503) 654-7387
Secretary	Liles Garcia	(503) 649-9288
Board member at large	Jerry Talbott	(503) 649-6717
<i>Call Letter</i> Editor	Rick Walton	(503) 284-5648
Librarian	Tony Hauser	(503) 629-4836

The Society's address is:

The Northwest Vintage Radio Society  
Post Office Box 82379  
Portland, Oregon 97282-0379



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# August 1998

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**On the cover:** The console on the cover is a Zenith 12H092R. By decoding the model number, you'll learn that it's a 1946 model, along with other information that describes this set. It's all explained in Padgett Peterson's article on page 3.

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**Call Letter Deadline  
25th of the month  
prior to publication.**

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**It's Summertime! No August meeting! See you at the next  
regular meeting on September 12 in the Buena Vista  
Club House.**

**Visit the NWVRS web site at:  
<http://www.peak.org/~wren/nvrs.html>.**

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 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.

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# From the Editor

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by *Call Letter* Editor, Rick Walton

Hoo boy, it's HOT! It was amazing to return to Oregon after two weeks in Texas and Louisiana and discover that it was almost warmer here than in the South. It was a good vacation but much too hurried to have time to look for radios.

Once again we've got a page of address changes, corrections, and additions. Welcome to those who are new members. If you change your postal or e-mail address, your telephone number, or want to change your collecting interests, please be sure to contact me with that information.

I received a phone call from charter member Pete Young, who told me that just recently he had undergone surgery for prostate cancer and that the doctor's feel like they removed it all. Although Pete only spent two and a half days in the hospital, he'll be recuperating for several weeks to come. We can expect to see Pete at the September meeting.

In this issue is the concluding article by Padgett Peterson about the history and dating of Zenith radios. The articles reprinted here come from Padgett's web site at <http://www2.gdi.net/~padgett/index.htm>, and are used with his generous consent.

Mike Parker is taking a breather for the Summer but he'll be back "In the Shack" this Fall.

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## 1998 NWVRS Calendar of Events

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- August 15** 7th Annual Ham Radio, Computer, and Electronic Equipment Swap Meet, 9:00 AM -- 3:00 PM, Cowlitz County Expo Center (Fairgrounds), Longview, Washington. Admission \$3.00
- August 16** PSARA Swap Meet. See page 9.
- September 12** Regular meeting. Monthly feature: Tombstones.
- October 10** Regular meeting.
- October 31** Fall Swap Meet. National Guard Armory, Washington Co. Fairgrounds, Hillsboro, Oregon.

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# Zenith Model Number Index & History, 1930-1935, 1936-196x

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by Padgett Peterson

*Editor's note: This is the second in a series of articles by Padgett Peterson, a fellow collector who lives in Florida. Padgett generously granted me permission to print these articles, which appear on his web site at [www.gdi.net/~padgett/index.htm](http://www.gdi.net/~padgett/index.htm). Padgett did considerable research into the history of Zenith models, especially the Trans-Oceanics. The results were first posted to the [rec.antiques.radio+phono](http://rec.antiques.radio+phono) Internet news group. These articles are copyrighted 1996 by Padgett Peterson.*

## 1930-1935

Note: Dates refer to Zenith model years. Typically Zenith brought out new models by Thanksgiving to be available for the holiday sales. As such the 1935 line was announced and on sale in late 1934. This has confused a number of people about exactly when various models were introduced.

The years from 1930 to 1935 marked both the emergence of Zenith as a dominant force in the market and a revolution in the technology involved.

The thirties also marked an explosion in models and variants plus a bit of sanity in the numbering schemes that would reach fruition in 1936. Model numbers were specific to years and from 1934 on the chassis type (number of tubes) could be identified in the chassis number

**1930** — For 1930, the big news was screen grid UX and UY tubes as model numbers counted off the fifties and sixties. Some confusion often occurs here because of Zenith's use of numerical suffixes to the model number for various power supply options. For instance a nine tube model 64 became a model 642 if equipped for 110v 25 cycle operation in the Northeast. Similarly a 563 was designed for direct current neighborhoods (often in inner cities).

The difference between the fifties and the sixties seems to be the loop antennas used in the latter as both were entering the tube-count-race with "double push-pull audio amplification". Manual automatic tuning similar to the push-button tuning in automotive radios was a selling point of the upper level models.

Chassis numbers from 1930-1934 all were in the 20xx series and were assigned in order of development. During the four year period, less than 60 chassis number were assigned so it was adequate

**1931** — The basic nine tube chassis was continued for 1931 in the 70 series with new electric remote control replacing the mechanical unit of the previous year for the model 74 only. The big news was a new, less expensive Zenette or Zeneth line of six tube chassis cathedral tabletops. To mark the difference, these were known as models A, B, C, a “richer appearing” D, L, M, and W. Spinet base was optional. Models often were suffixed with “H” which indicated the first use of Superheterodyne circuits instead of TRF.

**1932** — 1932 marked a real change: Zeniths were now sold “complete with Zenith Quality Tubes” and all radios had super-heterodyne circuits of ten tubes. The new line consisting of models 82, 822, 89, 892 (Hypermetrons) and 90, 91, & 92 (with automatic tuning) plus the continued (and still lettered) ZENETTES in superhet form only. There was also a 1932 model 103 “Ultra”

**1933** — 1933 marked an explosion of models and chassis that demonstrated to Zenith that they should never do that again.

Zenettes were no longer a separate line but were combined with the lesser models in tabletop and free-standing consoles represented by model numbers in the 200's. Experimentation was done in band selection with regular broadcast being combined with Long Wave (-5 suffix to the model number as in 210-5) or short wave (to 18 Mc). Most were 7 tube chassis though a few like the 288 which claimed to be able to tune to 25 Mc had eight tube chassis.

The pitch for 1933 “All Star Line” was the new 7-prong “Cathode Type” tube that “so far can be had only in a Zenith radio”.

Top of the line were the ten tubed chassis in the 400 series that featured variable tone control with visual volume and tone indicators plus Shadowgraph tuning, the forerunner of the yet to come tuning eyes.

1933 also was a high-water-mark of diversity with about 140 models based on 19 different chassis. This also marked the introduction of the even lower priced “Interocean” line with model numbers in 500 and 600 series.

**1934** — For 1934, the “little7” news was the revision of chassis numbers to an ordered sequence of four digits indicating the number of tubes and the model line number. If there were less than ten tubes, the first digit would be a 5 and the second the tube count, if more than ten, then the first two were the tube count and the second two were the model line. Model numbers were assigned in sequence but by tube count so each year the count got higher.

In 1934, Zenith models were briefly called "Challengers" and model numbers skipped from the 400s to the 700s since the 500s and 600s had been used for the Interoceans though there may have been two models in the 600 series (616 and 618).

Models with 5, 6, 7, 8, & 9 tube chassis were available which is probably what prompted the change to sane chassis numbers.

**1935** — Model numbers were in the 800 and 900s (and some carried over 700s) with chassis of 5, 6, 7, 10, and new 12 tube five band radios to exploit the shortwave craze in America during the mid thirties.

The big news (though not well received at the time due to its high price - \$750 "...AND WORTH IT") was the model 1000Z/chassis 2501 Stratosphere with 25 tubes in two chassis (mostly 45's) and three speakers. Earliest units had markings on the dial to 60 Mc though later production scaled this back to a saner 40 Mc.

The first of the Big Black Dials that would be a Zenith mainstay until 1942, it was really a design of a passing generation, its 16 tube successors of 1936 were much better radios though not half as valuable today.

An interesting sidelight in Zenith advertising for 1935 was the reference to "for twenty years makers of fine radios". This must refer to the first radios built by Mr. Mathews prior to enlisting in the Navy. The company's official historic brochure "The Zenith Story" - undated but evidently produced in late 1954 or early 1955 mentions 1915 as the year he began building radios.

This was used again in advertising over ten years later - a 1949 advertisement for the new G-500 TransOceanic mentions "Over thirty years of know-how in Radionics". 1919 is certainly supportable.

1935 also contained listings for several radios carrying 1100 series model numbers though little is known of these radios or even if they were ever marketed.

## **Zenith Date Codes 1936-196x**

From 1936 through the sixties, reading Zenith model years from a model number is as easy as reading the model numbers themselves. This same mechanism was used in chassis numbers from 1941 to 1949.

For model numbers the key is the first numerical digit following the chassis type letter (see letter codes).

In 1936, only two digits followed the letter model type so the lack of a third digit indicates this year. e.g. 7 S 28

For 1937-1940, the year is only in the model number, chassis numbers were simply assigned in sequence and carried forward across years.

1937 - 1 e.g. 6 S 159

1938 - 2

1939 - 3

1940 - 4

In 1941, chassis numbers also gained a code but in a letter.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Model code</b>	<b>Chassis code</b>
1941	5 (12 S 595)	A (12 A 4)
1942	6	B
(no civilian production Apr 1942-1945)		
1946	0	C
1947	7	D
1948	8	E
1949	9	F

NOTE: Where model numbers are concerned, Zenith often kept the same model number if a unit was continued without major change for several years. Hence the model H-500/chassis 5H40 was introduced in 1951 (H model year) and was continued into 1954 as the H-500 even though several chassis changes occurred. Thus Zenith was one of the first to "slipstream" in fixes during the run of a model.

In 1950, things changed again with model numbers adopting the same letter code the chassis used except it became the first digit in the model number. Note that the second digit in the model number is indicative of the number of tubes (later transistors) while the first digit in the chassis means the same (where chassis and model numbers differ - usually by one - trust the chassis number).

<b>Year</b>	<b>Model code</b>	<b>Chassis code</b>
1950	G (G-500)	G (5 G 40)
1951	H	
1952	J (skipped I)	
1953	K	

1954 began with "L" but with proliferating models, two digits were insufficient so more letters were used. Some were skipped (O,P,Q) to avoid confusion with other models.

Just to really confuse matters, when Zenith began producing transistor radios they received an extra letter near the front - a "T" so that in 1957, the six "tube" Trans-Oceanic was model/chassis A-600/6A40, while the nine transistor "Royal 1000" was model/chassis 1000/9AT40. Transistor models ("Royals") lost the active device indicator in the model number (became pure marketing) but could still be tracked by the chassis number.

Year	Model code
1954	L, M
1955	R,S
1956	T,U,W
1957	Y,Z
1958	A (ran out but started with G so...)
1959	B
1960	C

(There is indication that this continued erratically until 1982 when "M" was used for the third time. "Guesstimate" is that H was used in 1962, K for 1963, Z in 1968, D in 1972, K in 1979, and M in 1981.)

### Codes used in Zenith model numbers (1936-1949)

Model number decoded:

<b>8</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>TZ1</b>	
<b>a</b>					<b>8 tubes</b>
	<b>b</b>				<b>AC/DC/Battery</b>
		<b>c</b>			<b>1946 (introduced)</b>
			<b>d</b>		<b>TransOceanic</b>
				<b>e</b>	<b>TZ1 revision</b>

- a) First one or two numerical digits indicated the number of tubes (sometimes inflated by one)
- b) Followed by one or two letters as below
  - A - all wave ac
  - B - 6v battery

- D - 110v ac/dc
- F - 2v battery
- G - portable ac/dc/battery
- H - FM
- J - 6v battery/110 ac
- K - a/b battery
- L - long wave (below 550 kc)
- M - automotive, second letter indicates make
  - D - Dodge
  - F - Ford
  - H - Hudson
  - L - Lincoln
  - M - Mercury
  - N - Nash
  - W - Willys
- P - Police
- R - Radio-phonograph
- S - Shortwave (to 18 mc)
- T - 100v ac only
- U - Extended frequency short wave (above 18 mc)
- V - 6v vibrator
- X - 32 volt

**c) 1936 - Followed by two digit model number**

1937-1949 Followed by single year digit

- 1 - 1937
- 2 - 1938
- 3 - 1939
- 4 - 1940
- 5 - 1941
- 6 - 1942

(no civilian radio production Apr 1942-1946)

- 0 - 1946
- 7 - 1947
- 8 - 1948
- 9 - 1949

**d) Followed by two digit model number**

Note: indicates model year was introduced — if no major change, may have stayed same for years

- 1936-1942: repeated for different tube numbers but same model had same last two in different years.
- 1946-1949: unique model numbers

**e) Followed by one or more letter/numbers for revisions/ veneer/covering materials.**

# ANTIQUÉ RADIO SWAP MEET

**Sunday, August 16, 1998  
9 AM to 1 PM**

Shoreline Museum Parking Lot  
N. 175th & Linden Avenue, North Seattle  
(One block west of Aurora Avenue, or  
one mile west of Interstate 5, Exit 176)

Tune in to the largest vintage radio event  
in the Northwest, featuring:

*Tube, Transistor & Novelty Sets  
Deco Plastics • TV's  
Test Equipment • Parts • Tubes  
Restoration & Repair Service Info*

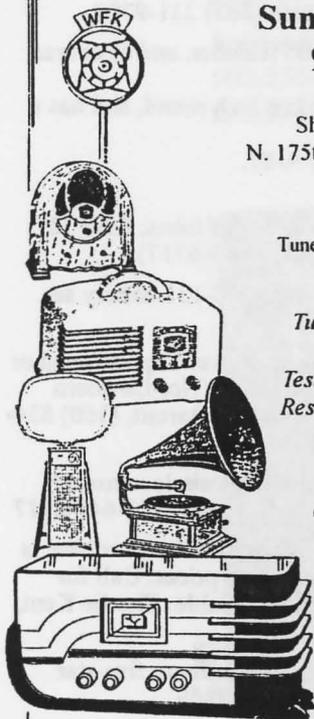
## FREE ADMISSION

Collectors, hobbyists and sellers alike  
are invited to buy, sell and trade  
old radios and related gear.  
Bring a table or tailgate.  
Plenty of parking.



A community event sponsored by the  
**PUGET SOUND ANTIQUÉ RADIO ASSOCIATION**

P. O. Box 7251, Seattle, WA 98133 (425) 747-1323 or (206) 546-5495  
<http://www.eskimo.com/~hhagen/psara.html>



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## Swap Shop

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**FOR SALE:** Thousands of tubes, hundreds of radio parts, panels, meters, surplus, etc. R5-D3 electronic surplus, Bob Lee, 6111 SE 82nd Ave., Portland, OR, (503) 774-6560.

**BUY, SELL, TRADE and RESTORE:** Contact me for quality restoration service on most pre-1960 electronics. I also buy and sell early radios, TV's, tubes, parts and related items. I'll buy one item or a whole collection.

VISIT MY WEB SITE: <<http://www.radiolaguy.com>> or e-mail: <[sonny@radiolaguy.com](mailto:sonny@radiolaguy.com)>

Thanks, Sonny Clutter, phone (360) 834-5741

**WANTED:** The Crystal Radio Guy wants crystal sets and toy germanium diode radios. Buy outright, or trade for other radios. Galen (503) 231-9708.

**WANTED: \*\*1)** PM Speaker for a Transoceanic 7G605 Bomber, and of course, the famous front lid. (Fat Chance!)

2) Electrodynamic speaker for a Philco 39-30. It is 6 inch round, and has a field coil resistance of 2750 ohms.

3) Audio Interstage Transformer for GE A-82 or A-87.

Call Myron White at (503) 629-5513.

**WANTED:** \*Ch. 9 and 17 plug-in crystals for CB radio. Audio tubes: 7591 (2) and EL34 (2). Have tubes to trade. Jerry Talbott, (503-649-6717).

**WANTED:** Schematic and servicing information for Philco 46-131 battery set. Not in Rider's! Contact Rick Walton, 284-5648.

**WANTED:** For RP-6, RS-6, etc., military CW transceiver: Power Supply (dead or alive); also, any parts, info, or a schematic for a NORCO (Northwestern Radio) 3-dial battery receiver, made here in Portland. Jim Barratt, (360) 834-4429.

**FOR SALE:** 1948 Crosley 9-122W -\$35 and novelty plastic train locomotive (Japan) with name "C.P. Huntington" on it-\$35. Jerry Talbott 503-649-6717

**FOR SALE:** \*\*1926 Radiola 62, excellent condition except the stretcher base is gone. \$150. Various telegraph keys - different kinds and prices. Call for details. 2 aircraft receivers. Call for details - price negotiable. Charlie Kent, (503) 281-9335.

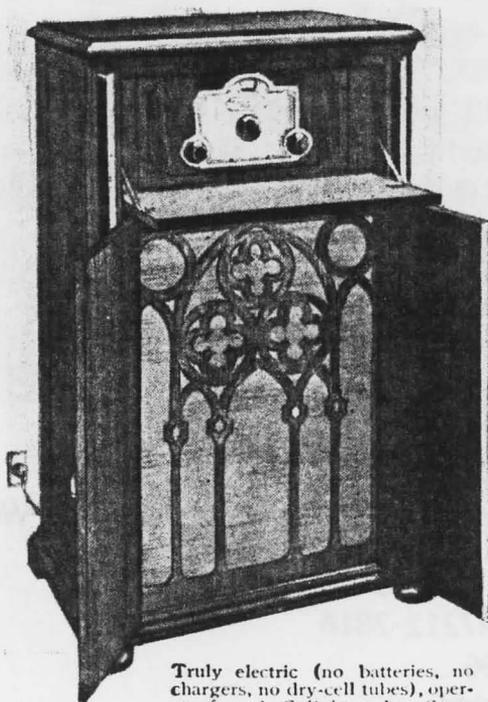
**FOR SALE:** \*\*1928 Zenith model 39A console. An ornate and rare five star radio. \$600.00 or best offer. Contact: Gary at (360)573-8889

## Leads And Needs

**Radio Theft.** Stolen from a vehicle June 7, 1998 at Medford, Ore. Scott Radio, consists of tuner and power supply chassis. Chrome plating very good. Has 14 selector buttons (7 down each side) on front panel of wood or simulated wood. Further description on request. Any leads would be greatly appreciated

Please contact: Russ Stone  
6790 Hwy. 66  
Ashland, Ore. 97520  
541-482-8832

or: Rudy Zvarich  
2227 NE 102 Ave.  
Portland, Ore. 97220  
503-255-2227  
E-mail is: [rhz1@juno.com](mailto:rhz1@juno.com)



Truly electric (no batteries, no dry-cell tubes), operates from A. C. light-socket. Spanish period walnut finish cabinet.

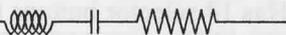
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## Roster Corrections/Additions

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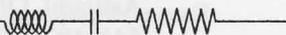
Barratt, James J. (Jim) WA7DYK  
26313 SE Leonard Road  
Camas, WA 98607  
(360) 834-4429



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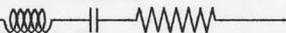
\*Floyd, Kevin  
2392 Debok Road  
West Linn, OR 97068  
(503) 598-1931  
Zenith consoles



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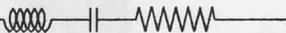
†Kagi, Patrick A.  
6710 NE 65th Ave.  
Vancouver, WA 98661  
(360) 694-6149 pat\_kagi@usbc.com  
Plastic and wood table radios, phonographs, and coin  
operated devices (jukeboxes, pinball, amusement games,  
player pianos)



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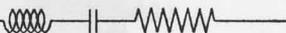
\*Miller, Robin  
P.O. Box 23  
Sweet Home, OR 97386  
(541) 367-8008  
General Collector



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Sypher, Kem  
3206 NE 31st Avenue  
Portland, OR 97212-2816  
(503) 287-7396  
General Collector



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\* New member

† E-mail address change

